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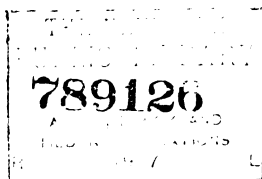
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FOREWORD

His proper name was Ned Kilgannon : but the world knew him affectionately just as THE DOCTOR. For he was M.D., licensed to kill, cure, or leave to the working of an inscrutable Providence.

At the time that he told these merry tales, he was a mellow youth of three score and ten, slipping, each day, dangerously nearer to Heaven. In the era of the Doctor's infancy, half a century before—when the nineteenth was in its swaddling clothes—the animal spirits of the Celt, notwithstanding the machinations of cruelly unkind fates, flowed freely.

Circling his hospitable board, o' nights, now, the Doctor delighted to see the other grey-haired children who had walked the morning ways with him. And when they dined they loved to live over again the gay past.

Hence this book.

2. 2. 13 - June 1871

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A COUNTY CLARE ANGEL

AY, ay (said the Doctor), 'twas in the good old days of the duello.

Dick was doing *locum tenens* down in the County Clare for an old fellow who had gone stravaging over Europe. Poor Dick seemed designed by the fates to do *locum tenens* and nothing else. This was about the tenth *locum tenens* for him within two years from he took the degree. Thankful enough, though, he was to get the job ; for tin was both scarce and seldom with him ; and, moreover, such was his good nature that when, by chance, he found money making music in his pockets, he could not sleep or rest till he spent it on his friends.

Anyhow, at the time I speak of, Dick, as I said, was doing his tenth turn, be the same more or less, down in Clare. Dick and I had ever been particularly good friends, and when I got a note from him commanding a visit from me, I did not hesitate.

"Ole man," Dick wrote, "I want you to translate yourself down here with as little delay as possible. You'll not find it dull, I assure you. When I condemned myself to this region, I thought it was to see



Castlecarriga, yawn, and die—and I came, thinking it pleasanter to quit the vile world on a (comparatively) full stomach here, than on an empty one in Dublin. I have been very agreeably disappointed. I have never been anywhere I liked better. Nice place—nice people. This latter reminds me to say, too, that I have an *affaire du cœur*, in getting safely through with which I wish for your moral support, ole man. This is *au sérieux*. I depend upon you. Don't disappoint under pain of forfeiting the best good wishes of

“ Yours everly,

“ DICK O'HARA.

“ P.S.—Drop me a note what day you'll come. My landlord owns a mountain nag, and a neighbour here has perpetrated a machine he poses for a dog cart. I'll drive over with them to Lisnamona to receive you off the coach, and trundle you here. Come to-morrow if possible.”

I wasn't a bit surprised to find that already Dick had his *affaire du cœur*—and laughed heartily over it. But I was bound to go down and have a week with him. The Clare breezes were what I just needed to blow the Dublin cobwebs off me.

I threw together a few ornaments into a portmanteau and took the Limerick coach next evening. Thank my stars, I have never been troubled with insomnia even in its mildest form, so I slept the sleep of the heavy-headed just whilst the coach, with many a rock and many a roll, traversed “ The Rocky R

from Dublin." And when Dick grasped my hand at Lisnamona next morning, I was as fresh as a last night's herring.

"Awfully kind of you, ole man," said Dick, his face lit up with welcome. "I'll not forget you for this—wait, let me take that bag. Here—here you are—this way! That's our circus there beyond," and he indicated a turn-out by the wall side, which moved me to hilarious mirth.

"Never mind, ole man," he said; "I candidly confess it's not ornamental—I think I hinted so much to you—but it's useful, decidedly useful. Now, you knaves," he shouted to a crowd of loungers who had gathered around the pony and trap, and were enjoying themselves at the expense of the concern with much relish. "You knaves, clear off out of that, and go laugh at your grandmothers, will ye?"

"Faith, sir," said one of them, "we'd search far afore we'd get a grandmother in these parts as droll."

"I suppose, sir," said another, "ye wouldn't part with the rig-out for money, would ye?"

"Sir," said a third, "would ye be so very kind as to give me the address of your coach-builder?"

Faith, if I hadn't caught Dick, and shoved him up to his seat, he would have given some of the wits a surprise they weren't prepared for. He had mischief in his eye, and when Dick O'Hara let out from the shoulder, Lord help the man that come in the way of his fist.

"For Heaven's sake, Dick," I said, taking the

reins and whip—such a whip!—in my own hands, and getting the business under way, “don’t mind the boys having their joke. Besides,” I said, “they couldn’t be mortal and not joke under the inspiration of such a spectacle as that.”

Dick here burst out a-laughing himself. “By Jehosophat,” he said, “it’s enough to make a fool a wit!”

And, for the five miles between there and Castlecarriga, Dick and I laughed plenty. We could not help it, for, whilst the nag cantered along with a most ludicrous pitching motion like an unmanageable brig in a choppy sea, the vehicle roared like an iron-shop in agony. We passed few who didn’t turn to look after us, and it took both of us to have our wits about us, and sharpened too, to reply to all the numerous salutes we got *en route*.

“Dick,” said I, “do you often go out to take the air upon this box of tricks?”

“Faith, Ned,” said he, “this is my second experience on it, and, please Providence, it’ll be my last—barring, of course,” he on second thoughts added, “that I must drive you over on it to catch the coach the day you leave me again,” and he gave me a quizzical look.

“Not,” said I, “if I know it. I have come into the County Clare with more *éclat* than, please the gods, I hope to leave it.”

“Heigho! one can never make some people grateful,” was all Dick replied.

Anyhow, we reached Castlecarriga and Dick’s

lodgings without any mishap other than that I feared my internal economy was, with the vile shaking, disarranged for the remainder of my days. But when Dick had, to his satisfaction, watched me lunch as a hungry man with a vicious appetite will, he pronounced the gastronomic machinery uninjured, anyhow.

And when Mrs. Kilfether, Dick's landlady, had gathered away the crumbs of our repast and we had started to make clouds, Dick unfolded to me his tale.

The fair enslaver, who had taken him in the toils this time—I say *this time* advisedly—was a Miss Clara Agatha Fitzsimmons, whose father was the principal business man in Castlecarriga, being at once draper, grocer, leather cutter, spirit and hardware merchant, and a farmer to boot, owning as much land, Dick assured me, as you could see from the top of a tower.

“Tell you what, Ned,” said Dick, withdrawing the pipe, and as he leant towards me speaking in a strictly confidential tone, “tell you what, Ned, Clara Agatha is an angel. Ay, oh, I fully anticipated that smile. But wait—just wait till you see her, and if you aren't forced to say as much I'll give you leave to—well—don't ever take Dick O'Hara's word regarding a girl again.”

I had smiled as the memories arose before me of all the many angels whose acquaintance it had been Dick's fortune to cultivate; which angels had eventually an aggravating habit of degenerating into very human vessels—much to poor Dick's sincere grief. Dick had ever had the knack of getting jilted; when which occurred he was hopelessly broken-hearted and took the misogynist's vow. Never,

never again would Dick put his faith in woman. And to this resolve he always stuck like a brick for often as much as two months together. But in two months at furthest there was ever a new angel due in Dick's orbit, when his vow went the way of many predecessors.

"It was quite a romantic affair, Kilgannon," Dick went on, "how we became acquainted. I wasn't quite a week here when I discovered a most charming strolling ground along the bank of a little stream, they call the Sheehy—a mighty pleasant little stream, with banks beautifully diversified by flower and shrub. On three successive evenings I wandered by this stream and tried to make poetry, but, by Jove, failed most ignominiously—I can't tell why, for the same was most inspiring ; you shall see for yourself."

"No matter, Dick, forge ahead with the romance."

"Now, Ned, upon my honour, if you are not agreeable to regard this in a serious light I'll—I'll—I'll turn the subject."

"Serious ! What's the matter with you ? Am I not as serious as a sexton ?"

"Well, as I said, for three successive evenings I wandered delightedly along this bank ; the first two were unadventurous, but on the third——"

"Ha ! the third time, I'll bet, was the charm."

"On the third," and Dick regarded me with a severe look, "lo and behold, I overtook two handsome young ladies who were trying to navigate a troublesome pass in a hedge. One, the taller of the two, had got *entangled* in the bushes. I promptly and politely offered

my assistance and saw her safely through, for which I got laden with blushes and thanks.

"As she and her companion were going in the same direction as myself, I got permission to accompany them. I took occasion to praise the beauties of the bank-path, and was very pleased to learn that, like myself, she—I refer to the taller, of course, whom I had relieved—was enamoured of it, and had made it her favourite walk."

"Ha!"

"Anyhow we had—or at least I had—a very pleasant walk and talk. We discovered we had many sympathies in common, and a mutual admiration for the writings of Tom Moore proved one fruitful source of improving conversation. Before we parted, I informed her who and what I was, and begged that she would let me know her name. As you have probably guessed she was——"

"Miss Clara Agnes Fitzsimmons, daughter to——"

"Agatha—not Agnes. Clara Agatha Fitzsimmons," and Dick seemed to derive an epicurean delight from rolling the morsel on his tongue. "Well, on the very next evening, I surprised her under a thorn-bush on the bank, reading Tom Moore to her cousin—I forgot to tell you that the young lady who accompanied her was——"

"It's of very minor importance, my dear Dick, who she was. Say she was a nonentity at once, and pass on to Miss Agnes—Agatha, I mean."

"Was a cousin; a pretty enough lass, but overshadowed by Clara Agatha——"

"Ay, you mentioned before, I think, that Clara Agatha was the taller."

"Oh, but I mean that she overshadowed her cousin in—in—in fact, both in beauty and intellect!"

"Oh!"

"Yes, she is remarkably well up in Byron and Moore and the poets generally. As I said, I came upon her in a romantic situation, reading and expounding Moore to her cousin Kitty Kinnane. My sudden and unexpected appearance threw the camp into a pretty confusion. I laughed heartily at how I had caught them. Clara Agatha pouted and said I was a horrid man to dog them to their retreat, so I insisted on Moore being produced from out the folds of her dress, in which Clara Agatha had hurriedly attempted to conceal it when she found the enemy upon them. And, after much remonstrance and a deal of chaffering, she threw it at me.

"You know, Ned, I have always entertained the vanity that I know how to do Moore justice. Well, I selected some of the most affecting passages, and did them in my very best style for the two young ladies—and with success, too, for whilst Kitty Kinnane was evidently much moved by my rendering, Clara Agatha was visibly affected. I read and read, Ned, not one of us thinking of the passing time, till the twilight shadows coming down compelled me to desist, and discovered to us that we had been a long time away with the poet.

"As we wandered home, all three were happy in the *thought of the very pleasant as well as the very im-*

proving evening we had spent, and ere we parted we resolved to form ourselves into a Tom Moore Club, that should meet under the thorn (which we subsequently named the Tom Moore thorn) on every evening practicable, for the better study of Moore's poems and mutual help therein.

"The idea was a bright one, Ned, and productive of more genuine delight than I ever dreamt to be in store for a useless, no-account fellow of my sort. Every evening, except for once in a wonder, we have met there. I should mention that my office here is well-nigh a sinecure ; nobody in County Clare, confound them, gets sick by any chance ; when an old fellow, having reached a hundred or so, thinks that common decency requires he should go to give the young fellows of only three or four score a chance, he sends for the priest, takes to his bed, and kicks the bucket with the least racket imaginable ; mention a doctor to him and the dying man will make you feel very small with the contemptuous laugh he'll treat you to ; his father and his grandfather before him (rest them !) died without the aid of any doctor, and he thinks himself as well fitted to die of his own account as they. So he rolls over and gives up the ghost."

"What the dickens has that rigmarole got to do with Clara Agatha ? Come back to Clara Agatha and Tom Moore."

"That's where I'm just come to. I wanted to show you that my days were my own, and there was nothing to hinder me from being a regular and *punctual* attendant at the Tom Moore Club.

" The first rule of the Club was that the number of members was to be strictly limited to three ; the second, that each of the three members was, in turn, to read to the others. This second rule—ha, ha !—fell through in the course of a few evenings. Kitty Kinnane, she preferred hearing either Clara Agatha or myself read to reading herself, and, to tell the truth, when I wasn't in possession myself, I liked to hear Clara Agatha only, for she has a soft and a melodious voice that sends a queer thrill through you——"

" Through you, you mean ? "

" Through anyone listening. And I more than fancy that Clara Agatha had a decided preference also for the new arrangement—Ahem ! ahem ! Mrs. Kilfether, do you think will this day clear off ? "

Dick's landlady, a robust lady, had come in with a basket of peats for the fire—for the day was wet and a trifle cold. While she remained Dick chatted to her and me off-handedly upon different subjects, paying marked respect to any remarks she made.

When she went, he raised his hand with a gesture enforcing silence, and after a minute tip-toed to the room door, opened it gently, and leant outwards till he heard her voice giving orders in the kitchen below. He closed the door and came back smiling to his chair.

" My dear Ned," said he, with some pathos in his tone, " she's naturally a bit of a tyrant," and he jerked his thumb towards the exit—" a bit of a tyrant, and she would try to come it over me if she could. *She's death on Clara Agatha*, and has nothing but the

hardest word in the dictionary for her, says she's a brazen skilt, and other things equally complimentary. She holds that now I am away from under my mother's eye—may Heaven reward her innocence—I need someone to keep a motherly eye upon me, and thinks that because she is the recipient of so many shillings a week, either presently or in perspective, from me, it is her duty to regulate and direct my thoughts, words, and actions. But I'm not going to stand that," and Dick flared up indignantly.

"Perfectly right, Dick."

"No! not stand it!" he said, still more firmly, on the support of my approval.

"Still, of course," he went on, softening his tone, "there's no use living in Rome and fighting with the Pope. The soft word which turneth away wrath best suits me, in my defenceless position here, to use.

"The reading, then, as I was saying, fell entirely to Clara Agatha and myself, and we didn't spare ourselves. Now the first glimpse of Clara Agatha that I got prepossessed me very much in her favour, for I saw that Nature had blessed her with more than the average share of beauty, and it only needed that I should become acquainted with the intellectual charms of her to compel my whole-souled admiration. In short, old fellow, to make a clean breast of it to you at once—Ned, *please* don't smile."

"I shan't, Dick, I feel more like crying. Trot ahead."

"To confess the truth to you—and you may smile and welcome at me, if you will—the Tom Moore Club

wasn't three evenings old when I was desperately over head and ears in love with Clara Agatha !"

When Dick blurted out this confession he made a very long pause, and unwaveringly looked me in the eye.

" Well, Dick, do you expect my condolence, or what ? " I asked as seriously as I could.

" No, but I know just what you're thinking."

" By Jove, Dick, the County Clare and Clara Agatha must have wrought wonders with you. A clairvoyant !"

" I know well you're saying to yourself that I'm a blamed fool. Well, you're welcome to your opinion—for the present, at all events. But when you've seen Clara Agatha, I know you'll have the generous honesty to say you wronged me. A fool I have been more than once or twice. Half-a-dozen times, if you will. I freely confess that. But a wise fool this time, by your leave."

" Well, if I grant the fool now, we can settle the adjective later on, I suppose. Let us meantime continue the chronicles of the Tom Moore Club ; they are mighty interesting."

" The Tom Moore Club is temporarily dissolved. That's the point I'm eager to come to."

" Phew-w-w ! The unpoetic toe of an irate pater was not entirely unconnected with said dissolution. Am I right ? Then the Tom Moore Club was propelled—not dissolved."

" You are about as right as usual. It had nothing whatever to do with it. But there's a County Surveyor *here*—pug-nosed and a cad. He, it seems, had

been pestering Clara Agatha with attentions for some months previous, and still persisted, for he's such a thick-skinned ass that he wouldn't perceive a snub though there was one the size of a decent turf-stack levelled at him. Well, this fellow soon got wind of the Tom Moore Club, and what do you think but he had the audacity to get Kitty Kinnane to take him to it, though the donkey knows as much and as little about Moore as he does about Magyar.

"He got Kitty to take him to a meeting of our club. It was, of course, a breach of the first fundamental rule of our club; but Clara Agatha, she is so gentle-natured that she wouldn't risk hurting his feelings by a hint—as if his feelings could be hurt! But she and I talked so brilliantly that I concluded that the fellow had got a dose and wouldn't have the cheek to come back.

"But I didn't know my man; he had cheek enough for half-a-dozen hogs. He turned up the very next evening with a smirk on his countenance that would make many a man sea-sick; and to crown all he had the sublime impudence to apologise—upon my solemn word—to apologise for being some minutes late. Why, my dear Ned, didn't I then and there brain him? Why didn't I?"

"Ah, why, indeed! I offer you your selection from three very plausible theories; *Imprimus*, the lack of a weapon; *Secundus*, of nerve to wield it; *Tertius*, of brains to use it upon."

"Well, he did apologise. The consummate scoundrel! He sat and simpered there that evening

also, and jawed too,—jawed—ventured to put his shovel now and then into a discussion that was about as intelligible to him as Greek would be to a bull-frog.

“ Clara Agatha, ever the slave of her good-heartedness, always smiled encouragingly on him when he made a remark, which drove the deluded fellow to exasperatingly presumptuous lengths, and he walked home on the other side of her.

“ I saw this idiot needed to be sat upon with a good bump, and that without more delay ; so, on the very next evening—for of course he came along to time again, with that infernal smirk plastered across his countenance—I informed Mr. O’Shaughnessy—O’Shaughnessy was his name—informed him, the first and unalterable rule of the Tom Moore Club was that not more than three persons could hold membership, and that, as a consequence he was *de trop*—and appealed to Clara Agatha if this wasn’t so. Clara Agatha’s superfluity of good nature, and regard for the feelings of even a nuisance who hadn’t got any feelings——”

“ Easy ! Easy ! Let me examine the logic of that sentence.”

“ For goodness’ sake, Ned, do try to be serious for once in your life. Wishing, I say, to let the fellow down easy, Clara Agatha said something—unmeaningly, of course—about Kitty Kinnane retiring, and Kitty, the stupid thing, took it seriously and said she believed the Club would derive ever so much more benefit from having Mr. O’Shaughnessy replace her

as a member ; and she would be only too happy to sit by as a literary mendicant and pick up the crumbs of the feast, or some blatherskitin' like that ; while O'Shaughnessy, the ass, he looked at the thing in just



O'Shaughnessy attempted to express an opinion when Clara Agatha and I were debating some knotty point.

the same ridiculous light, jumped at the offer and congratulated himself on becoming a member of the Club.

" Now, it was full time O'Shaughnessy was

squelched. So, when on the following evening, waxing vain with pride of office, O'Shaughnessy attempted to express an opinion when Clara Agatha and I were debating some knotty point——"

" Which ? "

" A knotty—k-n-o-t-t-y, knotty—point in Moore, I saw my chance and turned upon him my most withering look ; but, would you believe it ! the fellow, instead of being cut to the bone, as anyone with a shred of decency would, simply smiled that silly sickening smile, don't you know, of a real jackass."

" Dick, my dear boy, you must excuse me ; and if you want to enlist my sympathies you must tell your story in a common-sense way. I'll not deny that if I ever had the misfortune to see the animal referred to smile, I should very probably acknowledge that the play was silly and sickening, but I have *not* witnessed such an exhibition yet ; the jackasses of my acquaintances are not, I believe, given to smiling ; and, moreover, if they were, I should cut their acquaintance directly a hint of the fact came to my knowledge. Proceed, Dick."

" Ned," Dick said with a sigh, " I am wasting my story on you. You are infernally sarcastic, or silly, or both. You can only see a huge joke in the whole affair."

" On the contrary, old man, I'm all ears and serious attention. But when you want me to endorse your description of a jackass's smile, you attempt to draw too big a draft on my friendship. If you were my *own father*, Dick O'Hara, and in urgent extremity,

I wouldn't acknowledge for you the acquaintance of a smiling jackass. If you really desire my sympathy, Dick, tell your story straightforwardly, without hauling in by the lugs the most ludicrous illustrations in the bounds of fancy. Go ahead, Dick; I am eager to know whether O'Shaughnessy succumbed to that smile or you."

Dick threw into his countenance a pathetically appealing look that quite subdued me. Then he resumed :

" O'Shaughnessy only just smiled like——"

" An idiot."

" An idiot, and was going to dose us with an exhibition of ignorance, when I told him point blank to ' Shut up.' "

" Bravo, Dick ! "

" Yes, I consider that I was thoroughly warranted in doing so. Then there was some confusion and hot words, and, finally, Clara Agatha in tears, for which I couldn't restrain myself from threatening to kick the brute over the bank. Poor Clara Agatha got between us, and, by means of piteous appeals, calmed me a little and led me home. But then and there the Tom Moore Club was dissolved—for the present, at all events."

" Well ? "

" Well, I waited for two days, expecting, of course, and hoping, to get a challenge from O'Shaughnessy, but got none. The scoundrel, as I feared, hadn't much pluck in him. I was resolved not to see Clara *again till I had wiped out the insult this fellow had*

put upon her by his bearish quarrelling in her presence."

"Was O'Shaughnessy the cause of the quarrel?"

"To be sure," said Dick impatiently. "I thought I explained that clearly enough."

"Never mind; so you did. It's my stupidity."

"Not to see her till then. So, after waiting and waiting in vain, I sat down and wrote off a challenge to him myself, employed a temporary second (pending your arrival), with orders for him to take no refusal, unless the fellow wrote out a full and complete, and very humble apology for his dastardly conduct. O'Shaughnessy, not willing to do this, was badgered and coerced into accepting my challenge. The weapons are pistols, the place a hidden holm a mile and a half up the river bank. The time only remained to be fixed—now you're come, it shall be settled for sunrise to-morrow. Then, please Providence, when I've punished the cowardly boor as he deserves, I shall be in a position to treat with Clara Agatha. I'll see herself at twelve to-morrow, and formally propose; then see her father, to notify him that I intend accepting him as a father-in-law, and then—then——"

"Stop! stop! for Heaven's sake, Dick! Is this a huge joke?"

"Ned, do I look like a man in a joking mood?"

"Candidly, no. But you talk like such a one."

"Indeed! You puzzle me, Ned. Where do you seem to see the joke, then?"

"Answer me candidly and solemnly. Do you really mean to fight this man to-morrow morning? Do

if by the way you survive " (this struck home, I saw) " mean to propose to Miss Fitzsimmons? Do you (if so) expect to get accepted? How, in case she should marry you, do you propose to support her? And, finally, is the game worth the candle? "

" A pretty long bill to fill, faith. I mean Ned to fight this man to-morrow. I mean (if God spare me) to propose to Miss Fitzsimmons. I mean to get accepted. I mean to support her by—by—— Dash it! amn't I young and strong, and haven't I my diploma in my pocket?—and—and—I haven't taken this, of course, into consideration, but, old man, Fitzsimmons is worth five 'oughts if he's worth three-ha'pence, and has only the one child. As to your final very vulgar query (which, if I did right, I wouldn't condescend to notice), just you wait till you see Clara Agatha."

" May I, Dick, as your sincerest old friend, express my opinion candidly on the business? "

" My dear Ned, your opinion is what I most eagerly desire. Give it unreservedly, Ned, and you will do me a signal service. Your opinion always had, and always shall have weight with me; you know that, Ned."

" Well, my opinion, given, as you require it, candidly and unreservedly, is that you are acting the part of an unmitigated idiot."

" That's enough, Ned, that's enough! "

" And if I'm going to be your second in this ridiculous shindy, I feel it my first duty to ask you for Heaven's sake try and slip out of it honourably, without throwing away a ha'pennyworth of powder. I shall enlist

O'Shaughnessy's second to help me squelch the nonsense."

"Then I'll ask you, for Heaven's sake, Ned, if you don't desire to act the part of a friend to say so, promptly, and stand aside."

"Dick O'Hara, you've often heard that every man in love is——"

"A man in madness. I know that. Then have the kindness to humour me as you would a madman, will you?"

"It's my veritable belief that this latest angel of yours has—I'll not say trapped you, that would imply that she had supposed you to have a glimmering of common sense—not trapped you, but laid salt on your tail and caught you."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! I do like your verdure, Ned Kilgannon, there's something so delightfully refreshing about it; a young lady, the acknowledged beauty of the barony, with a dower for a modest princess, trapped me! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! What's this to do! Well, well, Ned! Then I take it that you won't act as my second?"

"You take it wrong, then. I shall."

"Honour bright? Give us your fist. Good old Ned! I expected you would rally me this way."

"I'll humour you to the top of your bent."

"No parleying now, Ned, for a compromise?"

"Not if the other fellow was sure to put as many holes through you as a tin strainer. It shall give me a melancholy pleasure, too, to attend before the *coroner* and identify the deceased. And I shall do

my best to secure that the jury adds a rider to the verdict, saying that, to the best of their belief, deceased induced his own death whilst temporarily insane."

"Have your joke, Ned. I'm sorry I don't feel like laughing with you now; but, please Providence, to-morrow, to-morrow!"

I saw O'Shaughnessy's man, and we finally arranged matters. I was burning with anxiety to get a peep at the angel who was the cause of all the infernal ruction, and my anxiety was speedily allayed, for, even as I sat with this gentleman in his room, he called me hastily to the window, and pointed out two young ladies who were sailing down the street, telling me that the one on the far side was Miss Fitzsimmons and her companion was Miss Kinnane.

I got a good satisfactory look at her as she came along, and, passing by the house, went out towards the country. "By George!" I then said to myself, "and that's Dick's angel!" She was a tall, firmly-built lassie; muscular, I should say; hair neither fair nor black, but between the two; features (like the figure) not strikingly angelic, the cheek-bones particularly being rather more prominent than, I should fancy, is fashionable amongst angels. She walked with a swagger, and might pass in a crowd without inducing severe criticism. That was the most I could say for Dick's Angel.

I learnt that the Angel, of course (as was only becoming in an angel) knew nothing of the bloody deed that was being hatched, though Kitty Kinnane kept herself *au courant*; but that was another matter.

I couldn't get Dick to bed till after one o'clock that night. "Of course, nothing's going to happen of consequence," he said to me with great gravity; "but all the same, there's nothing like being prepared for even remote responsibilities."

Consequently he wrote a long letter to his mother, and an even longer one to Clara Agatha. He read over to me this latter, and it was very affecting. Dick dropped three big tears on it, and then closed it. He locked both letters in his box and gave me custody of the key. He also gave me some verbal messages, not only for his mother and Clara, but for several old chums. This disagreeable business over, he brightened up, and with his slippered feet on the fender, sat for an hour talking with me over old times.

We had much trouble stealing off unknown to Mrs. Kilfether, but we were on the sod first in the morning. Dick, he attempted to whistle jigs and other lively airs, but despite strenuous efforts on his part, all of them glided away into the air of a Dead March! He tried several jokes, too, but they were ghastly failures.

O'Shaughnessy and his man just missed being late. I was sorely pressed to burst a-laughing when I saw the appearance of him. He looked like a last month's corpse who had been forced to leave the graveyard much against his will. The face of him would have made an undertaker's fortune. He mightn't have been frightened, though, for he was so long and thin that you might as well be shooting at a shovel shaft.

It was a study to see him when his man placed him *and put the barker* in his hands. He pointed the

pistol right ahead, and faced away as far as he could twist himself in the other direction.

"For the sake of Heaven," Dick whispered to me, "make the idiot lower that pistol—he'll let it off before he knows, and shoot me in cold blood."

We lowered O'Shaughnessy's pistol whilst directions should be given to them. O'Shaughnessy's second was to drop his handkerchief as the signal, and then both fire together. Though, if he wanted his man to catch this signal, he'd need to go to a hill sideways in the distance. That Dick was thoroughly nervous and uncomfortable couldn't be denied; but he made a brave, if only partially successful, effort to conceal it.

"Ready?"

"Ready!" Dick replied, with just the slightest tremor in his voice. He was looking away into far space, over O'Shaughnessy's head.

O'Shaughnessy, still absorbed in the study of the hills, and with pistol pointed and covering the landscape generally in its wobbling career, answered:

"Re—re—read— Stop! Stop! Stop! I was entirely in the wrong! I'll apologise!" shrieked O'Shaughnessy.

I overheard poor Dick mutter under his breath, a heartfelt, sincere "Thank God!" He was elated.

"Ned, my dearest, best friend, Ned, he must consent to write an apology from my dictation."

There was very little difficulty in getting O'Shaughnessy to consent to this stipulation. He would have signed his own death-warrant, if it had been demanded so long as it put off the event for a day or so.

"Ned, my dear fellow, congratulate me, Clara Agatha is mine this day." Dick was inclined to become frisky on the field if I hadn't sternly repressed him.



"Stop! Stop! Stop! I was entirely in the wrong! I'll apologise!" shrieked O'Shaughnessy.

O'Shaughnessy's apology was the most complete and abject that it has ever been my lot to see upon

paper. He shook hands with Dick and begged to have his forgiveness.

Dick was extravagantly generous; freely and heartily forgave O'Shaughnessy for acts and words that only Dick himself had been guilty of; and fervently asked God to bless him. I adroitly hurried him out of O'Shaughnessy's presence when I thought he was on the point of kissing him.

Dick immediately enclosed the apology to Miss Fitzsimmons, with a brief note begging to know how soon he might call upon her, as he had something of urgent importance to say to her.

He was then like a hen on a hot griddle till the messenger returned with her reply. Dick burst it open. It said:

"MY DEAR MR. O'HARA,—

"I am really thankful to learn that you made that horrid, horrid man apologise so humbly for his frightful conduct on Thursday evening week, last. It was just awful of him to carry on as he did. I am so glad! I must feel very, very thankful to you for taking my hurt feelings so much into consideration.

"I am just bursting to know what it is you have got to say to me. I *know*! It is a new interpretation you have discovered of some beautiful line in that dear, dear, old Tom Moore—and I would make you come up to-day and instantly, too, to tell it to me, only I am *so* busy arranging for my wedding trousseau.

"Of course you have heard that I consented last *night* to marry Mr. Garoghan, of Cornamuck—he is

such a dear, delightful man—but this is only tiresome to you. You must come up to-morrow and delight me with that grand new interpretation. I know it will be delightful. And, of course, your dear name is the very, very first on my list of wedding guests. To-morrow, remember—early ; till then—

“ Ever yours,

“ CLARA AGATHA.

“ P.S.—Don’t forget *to-morrow*.—C.A.

“ P.P.S.—Is it really a good interpretation ? Don’t forget.—C.A.”

“ Dick,” I said, when I thought he had sufficiently recovered, “ who is Garoghan, of Cornamuck ? ”

“ Oh, don’t ask me, Ned. He’s lame, crooked, ugly as sin, and three score and ten years of age ; but has no end of money—made it out of pigs. Excuse me putting such a question, Ned, but what day do you start for Dublin again ? ”

“ Why, Dick ? ”

“ Because—ah, on the whole, I think I’m not destined to shine as a *locum tenens* in Clare. So I’d like to join you.”

“ Public opinion, Dick ? ”

“ No, no, far worse. Mrs. Kilfether’s opinion.”

THE FEAT OF ATTORNEY PHIL

BALLYCLOUGHMORE was a Borough in them days, said the Doctor, and as flourishing a Borough—at election times—as e'er another in the County Tyrone. And, at this time I talk of, old Jack Grimes, who had sat for it three-and-thirty years, by the power of his purse, was after leaving the way for younger blood—by good reason that he kicked the bucket.

There was sorra much difference, indeed, between the two men running for it now. Six of one, half-a-dozen of the other, they were. Myself cast my lot with M'Cracken, and wrought for him all I was worth, on account he was a local man ; and by reason, moreover, that he greased my fist well for the business.

The opposition candidate was the name of M'Polin, and had a fine supply of money and means, and a plentiful scarcity of brains—so far as we knew of him. So far as we knew—but that same knowledge was small ; since we never got a gleek at the phiz of him till the election was lost and won. He was a something-or-other in the back parlour of Dublin Castle, or, as like as not, a pot-wrastler in the scullery ; one of these do-little, good-for-nothing divils who are fed and filled and have their purses well lined at the cor

of the country ; who do nothing for their money all day, and, over their port at night, curse the country that has the misfortune to keep them.

So, though I couldn't see much good would come from M'Cracken carrying the day, still I calculated that I couldn't be far astray in spoking his wheel for him—on the same principle that Granny M'Cormick put the poultice to wee Johnny's toe to cure the pain in his stomach—if it didn't do any good, sure it would do no harm, anyhow. Moreover, it well warms a man's blood at times a bit of a ruction, no matter whether he's on the right side or the wrong. And a purty hot ruction I foresaw this same was going to be. For, though Ned M'Cracken was a purty popular man locally, he hadn't the money of M'Polin—couldn't count silver to his gold—and in them days, as in these days, it was money made the mare go. And in them days, likewise, it made her lift her heels faster.

At the outset it looked as if 'twas going to be a pretty fair and square stand-up fight in Ballycloughmore, and for the first couple of weeks business went on both sides like moor afire ; and the heart of every man was high, and the blood lively.

But M'Polin's big purse soon began to tell. The hard-headed Scotchman in the North of Ireland can see as far through a millstone as the man that kicked it, and he knows well on which side his bread is buttered. Ballycloughmore was as Scotch a town as was in the County Tyrone, and the big men of influence in it very soon discovered that M'Polin had a

purse with no bottom to it, and that 'twas the part of a good patriot to work for him with a will.

Every man that had a personal friendship for M'Cracken of course stood by M'Cracken, as well as every man that loved a fight for the fight's sake ; and, over and above that, it was thought that, like meself, every other Papist in the Borough would go strong for him, inasmuch as they considered him an honest man, and a free and frank one.

And that was the size of what M'Cracken had to set in the scales again M'Polin's money. But we very soon saw that it was very far from balancing it, let alone weighing it down ; and every morning the sun broke on us it looked more and more like a lost game. So sure, too, was M'Polin of the power of his purse that he either didn't bother, or couldn't afford to come upon the ground himself. There wasn't a man in the constituency, nor even an agent or worker of his own, that could bid him " Good-morrow, M'Polin," if they met him in their stirabout of a morning ; for the sorra one of them had ever rested eyes on him in all their born days ; and the chances are that M'Polin himself wouldn't know Ballycloughmore from a bull's foot if he met it on the map. He wanted a seat in Parliament, and had the money to pay for it, and it was small matter to him who the electors were, or what they were, or what the devil they wanted, so long as they consented, in exchange for good money, to tack " M.P." to his tail.

That was to him, and that was his notion, and it's as like as not he couldn't understand what the sorra

reason they had for wishing to see the outside of his phiz, when, every morning they rose, he let them see what was ten times better—that is, the inside of his purse.

Well, ye have often heard tell that in love, war, and a Ballycloughmore election all means is fair—outside putting drugs in the punch—and it was small shame for us, when we were cornered, to try to make what capital we could out of his not coming. So we spent both time and honest money among the free and independent electors, circulating the fact that M'Polin was not one bit sound upon the big questions of the day, more especially on the question of all questions, "Who killed William John M'Cance?" and that this was the reason why he feared to come, himself, before the electors, or his agents, for him, feared to let him.

I should tell you that William John M'Cance was a Blood-and-Thunder, Death-or-Glory Orangeman, and Grand Master of the local lodge; and of a morning after the Twelfth of July, five years before, he had been picked up on the roadside, halfway between the Orange lodge and his own house, with a dinge in his skull, the size of a thrush's nest, and he as dead as Donal O'Doherty's cow when she was in the barrel, salted. And, while the Orangemen of the countryside raised a tremendous furore, and demanded the blood of every Papist from the River Boyne to Horn Head; these, in their turn, pointed out that they should look among themselves for the man who did the damage, inasmuch as William John, with five other companions, had left the Orange Lodge together two

hours after midnight, every man of them as full as the Baltic, and guzzling one another, as loyal comrades will, on a festive and friendly occasion. And then, though the Orangemen, in spite of creditable efforts, could never fetch the crime home to a Papist to the satisfaction of a fairly willing jury, no one dared to bring it home to themselves ; so that for five years, from that day till the day I speak of, the whole County of Tyrone never wanted a brave reason for argument, as long as the great question of the day, and the great question of the world, stood unanswered : " Who killed William John M'Cance ? "

It was a grand idea, entirely, for us when we thought to get the constituency—for four out of five parts of them were good loyal Orangemen—to doubt M'Polin's orthodoxy on the question of William John ; and we backed it up, too, by making out that he was just as unorthodox on every other question affecting Ballycloughmore. And we gave M'Polin's men a fright, I tell you, for nine out of every ten voters that they thought they had safely in line begun immediately to clamour why, if M'Polin was sound on these things that he told them he was sound upon, why he didn't come and face the music himself—meet them face to face and say his say without fear, favour, or compunction.

Then M'Polin's men got a bad time, and were taking the sweat out of themselves, as they had not done before, arguing and scolding and ballyraggin' their followers, and rattling the cash at their lugs to make them amenable. At the same time they sent

word, post-haste, to Dublin to M'Polin, for to tell him that if he wouldn't change his mind, come on the ground and speak up for himself, it was impossible for them to hold the voters. They had a sure majority and a big one for them presently ; but they didn't know how many more days, or how many more hours, they could keep them ; for these rascally rumours that had got out were doing havoc with the free and independent electors of Ballycloughmore ; and, as sure as there was powder in Derry, there would be such a cave-in as would surprise him, and leave him on the rocks, high and dry, if he didn't comply with their reasonable request.

By way of reply M'Polin he sent them a big draft and a notice that he was at Daith's door with gout in his foot, and half-a-dozen other complications in various corners of him ; that it would be as much as his life was worth to attempt to coach it there from Dublin ; that they were to put him in, if at all possible, without his presence, and he would see to it that every man jack of them was dacintly rewarded.

Our plans were working to surprise ourselves, and our hearts were going up like skylarks ; and, when we heard that M'Polin refused to come to the ground, we danced for delight at the prospect of a walk-over.

His men were grateful for the draft and accepted it ; but sent him back an immediate message that things were now ten times worse, and that, live or die, he must come, or else give the election to M'Cracken.

And when M'Polin heard this, he wrote that, alive or dead, he'd be there ; that he was tying himself

together, and would take the coach the very next morning, arriving in Ballycloughmore at a late moment, sure enough, but still in good time to reassure electors—namely, at ten o'clock on the night afore the election.

Then our hearts went down to our boots, and M'Polin's men were themselves again, and they were out on the streets haranguing the people and letting them know that, at very great personal inconvenience to himself and at remarkable sacrifice, Mr. M'Polin would turn up at the last meeting in Ballycloughmore and speak for himself, and convince them that he was as sound and staunch as a new tub upon all the national questions, but more particularly upon that of who killed William John M'Cance. They confidently asked the voters to suspend judgment till he would come and speak for himself; and they sowed some more silver up and down the town, and the voters right willingly gave their consent.

Upon this, Ned M'Cracken he called a meeting of his own Committee, and a down-in-the-mouth man he was. And he said, when he opened the meeting, "Boys, I think we must acknowledge that it's all up with M'Cracken—unless," says he, then, "there's a jaynius among ye who can put us on a new plan."

There was two minutes' silence, every man looking glum at his neighbour. I looked round the table myself, and, when I saw no man willing to speak, I jumped to my own feet, and says I, "I may be a jaynius, or I may be an idiot; but it matters little: I can give yous a new plan, anyhow."

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"What's that?" says every man, and they jumping where they stood.

"It's something," says I, "that's in my own head, and that I intend will remain there until I have decided it. I want a fast-trotting horse and a day's leave from my work."

"You can have six gallopin' horses and six days' leave," says poor M'Cracken, says he, "if they do you or me any good."

"One of both is sufficient," says I. And almost in as quick time as I tell it, they had at the door, saddled and bridled, the fastest trotter in Charlie Hemphill's stables, and I had pitched myself into the saddle, and was off, and never drew rein from then, which was twelve o'clock in the morning, till nine o'clock the same evening, when I pulled up at Phil Rogan's hall-door in Lifford.

Phil Rogan, yous have, every mother's son, heard of; the cleverest and ablest lawyer, and most ingenious man of them days in the North of Ireland; and the man who, through thick and thin, stood up for right and justice, and for Ireland, and his own side—which was the Papists.

In short time I was in an arm-chair by his parlour fire, and setting my case before him.

"And now, Phil Rogan," says I, "if the divil himself can see a way of defeating M'Polin, I know you can do it."

"Thank you," says Phil, says he, dryly. "So far," says he, "as I can see, there isn't knots of straws of difference between the two lads that yous are running.

It's a case of one being bad, and the other a d——d sight worse."

"Well, anyhow," says I, "M'Cracken was reared, as I may say, at the fireside with us; and the other man we never heard tell of till six weeks ago."

"Humph!" says Phil, says he. "It's a case of the divil you know being a better divil than the divil you don't."

"Very well," says I, "let us put it that way."

"And my work is required for the divil you know?"

"And," says I, "a substantial fee."

"And a substantial fee," says Phil, says he.

Then he fell into a brown study for fifteen minutes, and at the end of that time says he: "The lad from Dublin is due to arrive in Ballycloughmore at ten o'clock the night afore the election."

"Right," says I.

"Which," says Phil, says he, "will be Wednesday night, and this is now Monday night."

"Right," says I.

"I wonder," says he, in another minute—"I wonder if any of the Ballycloughmore Orangemen could, by any possibility, know me by sight?"

It was a part of the country where, by reason of his politics, Phil wouldn't be touched with a pair of tongs, and where he wouldn't be employed if the hiring of him was to save their souls.

Says I: "I don't believe there's a man, woman, or child among the Orangemen of Ballycloughmore that would know your face from Adam's," says I. "Have you got hold of a plan?"

Says he, " Maybe." For Phil was a cautious lad, ever.

" In the meantime," says he, " you better get a pick of supper and take to your bed, for it 's tired you must be, and you'll need to be afoot betimes in the morning ; we've a journey ahead of us."

I axed no further questions ; for there was no good questioning Phil. But in the morning after breakfast he ordered me to get saddled, " For we must make the best of our way to Aughnacloy."

Now this Aughnacloy was close upon fifteen good Irish miles from Ballycloughmore, and on the high road to Dublin, and it was through it M'Polin would have to pass in his coach going down to the election.

And Phil, when he got there, found that Billy Murdock, of the head inns, was engaged to send a coach next morning, twenty miles, to meet M'Polin, and fetch him into Aughnacloy, and, giving him a change of horses there, bang him through to Ballycloughmore, where he'd be due that night. He then found that the lad who was to drive him was a one-eyed fellow by the name of Billy Halpin, better known as Billy Ciotach, by reason he did everything with his left hand. Half-a-sovereign and a drink fixed Billy, and made him as secure as the Bank of Ireland.

" It 's a mighty handy thing, isn't it, to lose a linchpin on that road ? " Phil Rogan suggested.

And Billy, wiping his mouth after having a drink, said it was the handiest thing under the sun.

" Very well an' good," says Phil, says he, " you're to have a neat little bre'kdown half ways on your

journey, and such delay in getting it fixed again, as M'Polin won't get into Aughnacloy until it's too far gone in the night for him to continue."

"I'll give you my head upon that," says Billy.

As good as his word he was; contriving the neatest imaginable accidental bre'kdown ten miles from Aughnacloy, that it took a blacksmith and a carpenter three solid hours to repair again. Three solid hours during which M'Polin got leave to cool his heels on the roadside; and when, close upon the borders of midnight, Billy rolled him into Aughnacloy, both cold and hungry, and out of temper, he thanked the Lord to be able to get a roof to cover him for the night; and he ordered breakfast for five in the morning; for he was bent on being with the voters of Ballycloughmore in good time.

But, lo and behold ye! when five o'clock in the morning come, and M'Polin had tucked in a sizable breakfast, proportionate to a man of his girth, and then ordered the butler to get out a coach, with the fastest four horses in his stables, the poor butler had to inform him, "Sir, it's impossible; there's not a man owns the sight of a horse, or the shape of a car or coach in the town of Aughnacloy, that was not wakened out of his bed in the middle of the night, last night, with a sudden order to send every hoof he possessed, and every wheel, as fast as the divil could carry them, to Lord Drimark's place, twenty mile away, to draw the tenantry to the funeral of the Lord's lady. Instead of a coach and four horses," says the butler, says he, "I couldn't rise for you a jackass and

a turf-barrow, for there 's neither animal nor vehicle, of high or low degree, left within the bounds of Aughnacloy. The curiousest thing of the whole lot is there was not a soul of us heard tell of the death or burial till the sudden order come, by a breathless messenger, in the dead of the night. And, the man who would refuse Lord Drimark, myself would not give tuppence of bad ha'pence for his shoes in the morning."

Small wonder the poor butler had not heard of either the death or burial before. And he didn't hear of it again, till the Lord's lady did die outright, for good and all, five-and-twenty years after ; but every horse and every driver, in Aughnacloy, got a twenty miles airing, and an appetite for his breakfast that March morning, all the same. And there was bad blood and high words in Aughnacloy by that same evening, when, in ones and twos, the blind funeral returned ; for, from that day to this, it got no other name than the blind funeral.

However, that 's nothing to my story.

While poor M'Polin was tearing his hair in Murdock's head inns, in Aughnacloy, and sinking and seizing his landlord high up and low down, Billy Ciotach, in charge of a coach-and-four, was trundling Phil Rogan as fast as fury on the road to Ballycloughmore. Afore they got near the Borough they met M'Polin's men, far out the roads, on the watch for the coach ; for the sorra one of his agents could sleep all night for the nervousness, when they found he had not turned up.

" Three cheers," says Billy Ciotach, says he, rising on his seat, as soon as he got in sight of them, and,

waving his hat on top of his whip-stick, "Three cheers," says he, "for Mr. M'Polin, the Member for Ballycloughmore!"

And M'Polin's men cheered from the bottom of their hearts, for it's relieved they were when they found they had got him amongst them.

And my brave Phil—he was a stout, sonsy lump of a *bodach*, such as you might expect M'Polin to be—my brave Phil, he leans out of the coach, smiles from ear to ear, waves his hat to them and hurrahs, and then dashes on into the town, with the crowds galloping all round the coach, and cheering and screeching for Mr. M'Polin till the windows of the town rattled. The coach it was drawn up at the White Hart Inn, where M'Polin's agents had their headquarters, and Phil, when he got out of it, had not a minute to lose, and only just come in the nick of time to save his skin—had not time to draw his breath till a deputation, representing the men who were wishful to support him, asked for public audience of him, and mounted him upon a cart where he could be asked his questions, and could give his answers in the hearing of all. And mighty big, and mighty noisy, was the crowd that surrounded.

"In the first place, Mr. M'Polin," says the spokesman of the party, says he, when the lungs of the crowd had given out, "I beg to inform you that you have got three-fourths of all the free and independent electors of this ancient and honourable Borough of Ballycloughmore, and four-fourths of all the honest men within it, to support you, and return you as th

fit and proper representative to the House of Parliament—provided only," says he, "that you answer, to our satisfaction, these few questions, that I am now going to put you."

"Which," says Phil, says he, "I hope to do—according to my conscience."

"According to your conscience, yes," says the spokesman, says he, and the crowd thundered again. "Very well and good," says the spokesman, says he. "In the first place we want to know—according to your conscience—what is your opinion upon party processions in the North of Ireland, and what legislation do you propose to introduce on the matter?"

And then the crowd cocked every ear it had to listen for his answer to this.

"Well," says Phil, says he, "replying candidly to that, and according to my conscience, my opinion arrived at, after due deliberation, and full consideration of all the facts, and giving due justice to all sides, my opinion, I repeat, is that the great procession of the Twelfth of July, in celebration of the Battle of the Boyne, and victory over Pope, Popery, brass money and wooden shoes, is a just, lawful, righteous, and highly commendable demonstration, worthy of the support of all patriots, no matter what their opinion; and that, on the other hand, the Patrick's Day march is unnecessary and useless—not to say criminal—inasmuch as its chief errand and object is to provoke the sleeping passions of just and right-thinking men. And, in accordance with this, I would propose to introduce into Parliament a Bill to abolish Patrick's

Day, and render all party processions on that day illegal, unlawful, and in contravention of the constitution of this realm."

And when the crowd heard this, the roar that they raised might be heard from Lough Erne to the Bann shore.

"So far so good," says the spokesman, says he, well satisfied, when he had got silence again. "The second question is, in case we return you to the House of Parliament as our fit and proper representative, what proportion—according to your conscience and to ancient usage—are you prepared to subscribe towards the annual bun-worries held each year in connection with the various Orange Lodges, Sunday schools, and teetotal societies of this ancient and honourable Borough of Ballycloughmore?"

Poor Phil, who was enough of a North of Ireland man to know that the tea-party—or bun-worry, as it was better and more properly known—was the radical article of faith without which few societies could be held together among the Ulstermen, and he replied straight up: "Well, according to my conscience, and according to ancient usage, only going one better—so long as I remain your fit and proper representative in the House of Parliament, I am prepared, and hereby undertake to supply one-half of the expenses necessary to defray the cost of all the usual annual bun-worries that take place yearly in connection with every Orange Lodge, Sunday school, and teetotal society in the ancient and honourable Borough of Ballycloughmore."

"Good, good, good!" says the spokesman, says he

And the crowds cheered, this time, with all the powers of their stomachs, as well as with their hearts.

"Very well and good," said the spokesman, says he, when silence was once more restored. "The third, and last test question, which I am instructed to put to you before our people can undertake to return you as their fit and proper representative to the House of Parliament, is," says he, "the simple one of who, in your opinion, and according to your conscience, who killed William John M'Cance?"

And then the crowd set up their lungs again.

"To the best of my opinion," Phil replied, "I have always believed, for a dead surety, that the life of that illustrious man, who reflected credit on his country and credit on Ballycloughmore, was cruelly taken by a vile and red-handed Papist——"

And then, again, the crowd yelled with all its lungs.

"This," says Phil, says he, reaching out his hand and silencing them when their lungs would not let them keep up the yell any longer, "this has always been my firm and fixed belief—up till last night, when I dreamt a dream that was a most wonderful dream, and in which I was assured—and, gentlemen, I am speaking according to my conscience—that the poor Papists had neither hand, act, nor part in the transaction; but, that the blow that bruck the skull of William John was, in a friendly scrimmage, delivered by the hand of a friend and comrade, and a brother, or to speak more mathematically correct, delivered by the hands of half-a-dozen friends, comrades, and brothers."

That was enough.

The scene that come after it would take an abler man nor me to tell ; but only there was a large force of police handy, who intervened with haste, and very hard batons, there wouldn't have been as much of Phil left in five minutes as would have identified him to the Crowner's Jury. But, when the police broke them up, and got him safely off, they rushed upon the polling booth, like a full sea, and went, as solid as cast steel, for Ned M'Cracken.

And, when, along in the course of the evening, the rale M'Polin, aiting the head off himself with the dint of rage and vexation, come rolling into Ballycloughmore as fast as foaming horses could fetch him, the ears of him were dundered with "M'Cracken, M'Cracken for ever, the new Member for Ballycloughmore !"

He stuck his head out of the carriage window, and he swore at the driver to wheel his horses without delay, and drive him to Dublin, or the devil.

He resumed his back-stair duties at Dublin Castle, and died, half-a-dozen years later, of a complication of whisky-punch and apoplexy.

As a Member of Parliament, both Orangemen and Papists admitted that Ned M'Cracken was not half bad, but always defended the rights of both sides and the wrongs of neither ; and the first vacancy turned up for an Attorney-General for Ireland he wanted to run Phil Rogan for it. But poor Phil said he wasn't rogue enough to make a successful member of the Government, and he preferred, in his own humble

way, to continue working at home, for Ireland, justice and the poor.

And there was many's a clever thing he done after but none to surpass his feat at the Ballycloughme Election.

HOW CONN RAFFERTY MISSED £5,000 A YEAR

"INDEED, and 'tis so," said the Doctor, as he brushed down his vest with his napkin.

"What's so?" said everybody round the table, for the remark seemed *apropos* of nothing.

"That there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," said the Doctor. "Wasn't my friend, Moloney, decanting upon that, shortly back?"

"You mean descanting, Doctor."

"Do I? Well, the other is no libel on Moloney."

Neither it was.

By an effort we recalled the fact that Moloney had quoted that proverb somewhere close after the dinner began.

"There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, *exempli gratia*, the case of Conn Rafferty."

"And who was Conn Rafferty?" said we, "and what was his case?"

"Both of which," said the Doctor, said he, "I was about to tell you.

"Conn Rafferty was an old and particular chum of my own, and, indeed, if I would say it, a distant relation, too. Our mothers, I think, were somewhere between third and fourth cousins. My own mother's

name was M'Grath, but her mother's mother went by Rafferty afore she got married, and that's how I trace back into the Rafferty family. But no matter for that, it wasn't because of our blood relationship that Conn and myself were comrades.

"He had an uncle by his father's side, living within a half quarter of a mile of our house at home; and, when himself and myself were bits of brats with short clothes on us, he used to come and spend half a year at a time in this uncle's house of his. And the both of us scampered about together, and were close companions for years, and used to murder each other like brothers every day. He went through school with me for a good part of my early course; but, when he had got what Father Donnelly styled 'a thorough, everyday education, fitted for a gentleman of leisure,'—which Conn was destined to become—he dropped out, and I went ahead with my studies, alone.

"Now, Conn's father and mother had both died when he was still at school, and he was under the guardianship of this uncle I told you of. He was a mortal wealthy man, was this uncle, and, as the gout and good luck would have it, the uncle, he kicked the bucket purty soon after. And every brass farthing he owned came to Conn Rafferty. And then my brave Conn was on the top of the world, which was a mighty fine thing for a chap like him on the edge of his welt. He had youth, health, and strength then, and the full of a creel of money with them; the whole world before him, and the will and wish to enjoy it.

So, as you may well suppose, Conn was not, them days, a chap to be pitied.

" Well, he took his whack out of the world, there is no doubt of it, and the world was more than half kind to him, and the mothers of marriageable daughters kinder still ; for he was a poor boy, that sorely needed looking after—in their eyes—and look after him they did, a troop of them, as if he was—or was to be—their own son.

" He was coaxed and coddled, and made much of, and tried to be looped in at all turns-about. But Conn, though he was a youth, was not so very young as to wait for any of their mothers' daughters to put salt on his tail. He got into some purty tight corners, no doubt, but the luck, somehow, was ever an' always with him. And, tight as the corners were, he always managed, somehow or other, by hook or by crook, to get out of them again ; and, indeed, to tell the truth, the tighter they were the more Conn seemed to enjoy them, and the greater glory he gathered by getting clear again.

" There was many a purty girl, indeed, he came across ; and many's and many's the purty one he put the *comether* * on. But, though he would be fond enough of each of them, for a time, he didn't stick to any one very long, for he very soon found out that not one of them was just what he wanted, though if you asked him just what he wanted, he couldn't exactly tell you. No more can I tell you if he wanted a woman at all or not. But myself thinks that Conn got chary

* The blarney.

and suspicious of most of them, from suspecting that they valued him more by the amount of metal he could jingle than by anything else ; and when he found out this of a girl he always gave her the go-by.

“ After a while he got purty philosophical, and he came to say that woman was all right enough—in her own place—but that so far as he saw of them he wasn’t convinced why he should take any woman’s daughter, to support her, and shovel out his money that she might flutter in frills and flounces. And when it had come to this, I said to him, ‘ Conn, my lad, you were built for an old bachelor, and an old bachelor is what you’re going to be.’

“ Conn, he laughed hearty at this ; but at the same time he didn’t deny it in words, and the reason why was—as I think—that he couldn’t deny it ; for it was beginning to break on him that maybe, after all, it was an old bachelor he was meant for. And, as he had rather more than half a selfish touch in his nature, he seemed no wise at all displeased with the prospect.

“ Now amongst the property that his uncle left him was the island of Innis Fad, lying off the coast of Connaught ; and this island used, in the summer time, to be a favourite resort of his. It had a fine residence on it ; and the fishing, and shooting, and yachting couldn’t be better than they were. A brave large island it was, too ; a long day’s journey to travel round, half a day’s journey across, and with near about two score of tenants on it.

“ Well, as Conn begun to get more and more tired of the society of prospective mothers-in-law, he began

to spend longer and longer on this island every year with none but some one or other of his men friends about him. He begun to take an interest in farming, and fattening cattle ; and, in a short time, made this his principal residence, and spent nine or ten months of every year in it. And then we all agreed and said that Conn Rafferty was a bachelor, fixed, for life.

“ There is someone of them poets, or other, has made a very apt remark about ‘ the well laid plans o’ mice and men ’ ; but I don’t just recall, at the present speaking, who this poet was, or what he said ; but it was something good, and to the point anyhow, and you will have to take it for granted, lads. But anyhow, what the poet said on this subject soon looked very much as if it was going to tally exactly with the case of Conn Rafferty.

“ For one summer, in the early part of it, there came to the island a harmless-looking, grey-haired old gentleman, with a rather pretty daughter. He was one of them tourist chaps, who get plenty of money without earning it, and spend three-quarters of it trying to kill time. Before he came out to the island, he sent ahead of him a letter of introduction that he had got to Conn from Dr. Moroney, of Trinity. The Doctor, in his note, told Conn that the bearer of this was the well and widely-known antiquarian, Sir Joshua Copley, of Kidderminster ; that he was going to make a tour on the west coast of Ireland, partly for pleasure, and partly for purposes of antiquarian research ; that as Conn was so well and intimately acquainted with every foot of ground on the coast,

both mainland and island, he, Dr. Moroney, had directed Sir Joshua to call upon him; and he requested his good friend, Conn, to be so kind as to invite him to stay on Innis Fad for a couple of days or a week, that he might give the antiquarian some tips on topography.

"In addition to this letter of introduction, there came to Conn, by the very same post, a private letter from Dr. Moroney, with reference to Sir Joshua also, telling Conn that the old fellow was so wealthy he didn't know what to do with his money, and could afford to make hogs and dogs of it if he liked. And, moreover, the Doctor said: 'You will find his daughter, who travels with him, quite a pretty personage, and interesting. Not the less interesting, let me tell you,' he said, underlining the words, '*for as much as she has an income of five thousand a year in her own right.*' See your duty, friend Rafferty," said the Doctor, "and do it. A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse."

"If there was one branch of research that Conn Rafferty had less interest in than another, it was antiquarian lore. He was too much a man of the present, and, maybe, a bit too much matter of fact; and any time he ever found antiquarian chaps come sneaking about Innis Fad, he showed them a cold countenance; so he gave Dr. Moroney a left-handed blessing now when he read these. Conn thought it was bad enough to ask him to tolerate the old Englishman upon the island at all, let alone have to entertain him in his own house while he stayed there, and turn his bag

of topographical knowledge inside out for the old chap's enlightenment.

"But, nevertheless, he knew he must oblige Moroney; so, ungraciously enough, he sat down and penned the old fellow an invitation to come along, himself and his daughter, and put up with him on Innis Fad; and he sent out Micky Halligan, his boatman, to the mainland to deliver it.

"As soon as he got the invitation, the old chap didn't let much grass grow under his heels till he was on the island, bag and baggage, and his daughter along with him. Conn Rafferty, who, for all his cynicism of late years, knew how to be gracious when he liked, received the pair of them with more cordiality than might have been expected of him; putting them very much at their ease indeed, and, in his kindness, giving them the impression, that they were really and heartily welcome there.

"I was them days putting up with Conn to spend a month with him; and enjoying myself as best I might; for, like the good soul he was through and through, Conn didn't cut one of his old acquaintances when he fell into all his wealth; and there was scarce a year passed that I didn't spend some time, less or more, with him.

"After what Dr. Moroney had said in his letter to Conn, myself was a bit curious to see the daughter; and when they arrived, and when Conn introduced me his friend, Dr. Ned Kilgannon, to them, I took particular pains to size her up. 'Conn, my boy,' says I, after they had been shown to their rooms, on

arrival, to dress for dinner, 'give me your opinion?'

"Conn looked at me for a minute with enough scorn



Conn received the pair of them with more cordiality than might have been expected of him.

in his eyes to kill a cat, and says he at length—'My opinion! On what?'

“ ‘Come now,’ says I, ‘you know very well. Pre-tence doesn’t go down with me. Give me your opinion,’ says I.

“ ‘On whether you are an ass,’ says he, ‘or only an idiot? Well, I have, so far, seen no reason to alter the old opinion, that it’s six of one and half-a-dozen of the other with you.’

“ Says I, ‘What do you think of Kitty Copley?’ I felt I might make this familiarity since I had read her name ‘Catherine,’ off her boxes. ‘What do you think of Kitty Copley?’ I repeated.

“ ‘I think of her,’ says he, ‘that if she had any Christianity in her heart, she would bundle up her old father and hoist him off with her out of Innis Fad by the morrow mornin’ at latest.’

“ There was no making any hand of Conn, I saw. I thought the sight of her should have softened his heart, for she was not unwinsome by no means—far from it. But he was as surly as ever. At the dinner I studied her more; she was a girl that had evidently her share of the good qualities. She was devoted to her father—very, very much devoted to him—that, in fact, was the chief and strongest point I saw in her. She gathered every word that fell from his lips, as if it was pieces of gold he was dropping; and, when he told a story, or stated a fact, or gave an opinion, or expounded a theory—for he was constantly doing one or other of these—she looked proudly around at both of us, to see if we were profiting by his discourse as we should.

“ Not, indeed, that she couldn’t speak for herself.

Myself thought her rather engaging and interesting in her discourse ; and so, I saw to my delight, did Conn, as dinner progressed. And by the time dinner was over, I had got her sized up pretty well, and my mature opinion then was, that, everything considered, both mental and physical qualities, and seeing around her, in my mind's eye, the halo that five thousand pounds would encircle any girl with, I concluded that she was a really attractive girl, and one that it would be well worth Conn Rafferty's while to cultivate the acquaintance of.

" And when I smoked a pipe, and took a night-cap with Conn, immediately before throwing ourselves into bed, I think we chatted less of the antiquarian than of the antiquarian's daughter. And it gave me pleasure to find that Conn was in an appreciative mood ; and that he consented she would not make a half bad wife for the fellow who'd be lucky enough to get her. ' Good and attractive qualities,' says Conn, says he, ' make a good woman good ; but five thousand pounds a year, on top of that, make a good woman magnificent—I'll not deny it, at all.'

" ' I am glad in my heart, old chap,' says I, ' to hear you say so.' I remembered well the deludherin' way Conn used to have among the girls a very few years ago ; how I never knew him to fail, in carrying with him and winning over to him, any woman he set his heart upon ; and, minding this, I clapped him on the back, and I said : ' Old man, go in and win.' But when I said that he took a sort of waken up to himself, *and he turned on me as if he would tear me, and he*

says : ' For the Lord's sake, Kilgannon, don't be a blithering idiot ! Good-night,' says he, ' and go to your bed, and pray to God for the gift of common horse sense.'

" I said nothing, for I knew Conn's way ; and I guessed too, what was the best way to manage him. And in the morning I saw that I was wise ; for at breakfast Conn made himself more agreeable than ever I had known him for twice twelve months before. He was brilliant, and seemed the old Conn come again. He showed a lot of kindness, and paid a deal of deference to old Sir Joshua ; and the daughter was doubly gracious to Conn in return. There was one thing, however, I noticed in her, and for Conn's sake I was sorry for it. It was that she didn't seem to have track or trace of the flirt in her nature ; her mind was too serious for such blatherskitin'.

" The old man, as we learned from his discourse, was not merely a member of the British Association, but he was one of the most honoured and respected in it, and one of the few whose opinions carried the most weight. Just this year he was running for president ; and that fact filled most of the poor fellow's thoughts ; and, by consequence, of his daughter's thoughts, likewise. Both of them were not alone anxious, but they were almost distressed over it. A man running for the post of Prime Minister couldn't, you would think, be half as much concerned.

" The election was to come off a couple of months later. There had been three others in the running, but one of them had dropped out, and then another,

and now the thing was entirely between Sir Joshua and a very formidable fellow, that he evidently dreaded very much, the celebrated Dr. Ketchem.

"I gave Conn a dig with my toe under the table, to be sympathetic with the old fellow; but he didn't need the reminder one bit, for he was both as attentive and as sympathetic as any old bore could wish; and the more attention and sympathy he bestowed upon Sir Joshua, I noticed that Miss Copley's attention and sympathy for Conn increased in the like proportion; and, before breakfast was finished, Conn was a warm friend of her father's, and she was a warm friend of Conn's.

" 'And, begad, Conn,' I said to him after, 'you've made a grand start anyhow, if you can only manage to keep up the pace. I'll swear you have Kitty Copley half in love with you already; you will not be worth a pinch of salt if you let such a grand thing slip through your fingers, and I will cut your acquaintance,' says I, 'and never acknowledge you more.'

" 'Never mind, never mind,' says Conn, says he, in the best of good humour. 'I do believe, with you, that I didn't make half a bad start at all; and, if I know Conn Rafferty,' says he, 'it will not be his fault if he doesn't make a good finish. You just lie low, and sing small,' says he, 'and look on. She's a winsome girl,' says he, reflectively, 'there's not a doubt of it.'

"Before starting out on antiquarian explorations elsewhere, Sir Joshua asked Conn to show him anything worth while in that way to be seen on the island. And poor Conn, unfortunately, had to plead that

though it would have been in his power to show him some remarkable ruins half-a-dozen or half-a-score of years since, there had been scoundrelly Goths and Vandals at work, who, in spite of all his watchfulness, destroyed the best of them.

" He told them this, but he took good care not to tell him that Conn Rafferty spelt the afore-named Goths and Vandals, for he had contrived a grand garden wall out of the combined remains of two structures that were nearly as ancient as untruth. And he could show a brand new and very useful hen-house that had been translated from the residence of a sixth-century saint. But my brave Conn was discreet, and neglected to draw Sir Joshua's attention to these interesting relics ; and he would have given a good long roll of banknotes, just then, that the garden wall and the hen-house hadn't been, and that the ruins from which they were raised, were still extant for the delight of Sir Joshua.

" We started for the island, anyhow, and visited the few paltry relics of old time that were still to be seen ; and which relics were to be seen because they had been too meagre to be serviceable at the time Conn was improving everything, and removing the eyesores.

" Sir Joshua was, naturally, a bit disappointed that such an out-of-the-way island didn't contain fine ruins, more after his own heart than the couple of scanty things Conn was able to show him, and Sir Joshua being disappointed, Miss Copley was, of course, ditto, and then Conn's hopes were, naturally, a good

bit dashed, and my heart was heavier for him than I thought it would have been.

“ ‘ And do you assure me,’ says Sir Joshua, says he, when he had seen all of them, ‘ do you assure me, Mr. Rafferty, that these are the only ruins now to be found on your island ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Yes,’ says Conn, a bit downheartedly. ‘ Yes,’ says he, ‘ them’s all the ruins.’ ‘ All,’ says he next moment with a snap, ‘ all except one little one.’ ”

“ ‘ Oh,’ says Sir Joshua, ‘ so you have another then ? ’ ”

“ I whistled into myself, and I couldn’t think for the life of me what other ruin there was, barrin’ the ruin of our hopes—Conn’s and mine—and I didn’t for a minute suppose that he was going to lay this one open for the inspection of Sir Joshua and Miss Copley.

“ ‘ Yes,’ says Conn, says he, that way, ‘ there is a little one which you may see from you half way up that Knock there beyond. I had near a’most forgot about it, for ’tis a bit out of the way. Still, there is no knowing but it might be of interest to you, and all the more so, because it is in a better condition than any of these other things I have shown ye. Come, step out with me, and you’ll soon see for yourself,’ says he. And out the three of them stepped ; and, myself all wonderment—for I had never known of these ruins before—steps out after them. And, when we came to it, sure enough, there I beheld one of those old domical structures, same as some which are yet to be found *round the west coast*, and which were used by the sixth

and seventh-century saints to retire into for prayer. I seen myself that there was new hope in Conn's eye when he showed us this structure ; and, indeed, my own heart was glad for him.

" It was in such comparatively good preservation that old Sir Joshua went into raptures over it, and his daughter into ecstacies. And one of them got on every side of Conn, and took hold of him, affectionately, by each arm, and besought him to tell them the history of what he knew of it. Sir Joshua upbraided him with not giving him the news of this grand relic before he had time to draw the first quiet breath on the island of Innis Fad.

" He said that with the exception of two others in County Kerry, this was in a finer and better state of preservation than any other oratory in the country. That, moreover, it had the distinction of varying, in several most important and vital points, from the usual style of these old oratories ; which made it all the more a most remarkable and most sensational discovery, worthy, indeed, of the paper which he would prepare upon it for the British Association.

" ' What is the tradition about it ? Tell me, my dear Mr. Rafferty ? ' Conn stammered a wee bit at this, and hemmed and hawed, in some confusion, for a minute, but he then told him the tradition was scanty enough. ' Nothing more, in fact,' says Conn, ' than that it is the house of one of the very, very old saints. It is called—called—oh bother me ! what's this it's called ? Ay, Teach Molaisé, or the House of St. Molaisé.'

“ And when Sir Joshua heard this, the old fellow clapped his wrinkled hands and crowed with the very delight. ‘ Why,’ says he, ‘ that fixes it as old, and old enough. St. Molaisé, as all the world knows, flourished on this west coast in the sixth, or at the very latest, seventh century. The bitterest and most grudging enemy will not deny that to me. This is remarkable, extraordinary, astounding ! ’ And Miss Kitty clung to Conn Rafferty’s arm and crowed, too, and looked up in his face with affectionate delight.

“ But the best was to come, for, on a closer inspection of it, Sir Joshua made the still more sensational discovery that not only was there a rough attempt made to splay the window externally, but also traces of lime mortar were to be found. ‘ It may be that you, Mr. Rafferty, didn’t know the extraordinary importance of this discovery, especially to me just at the present time. For ages,’ says he, ‘ amongst antiquarians the theory has been accepted that lime mortar was never used in these regions earlier than the ninth or tenth century ; but I, myself, in the course of continuous research during the past ten years had got good grounds on which to build the theory that lime mortar was known and used here in the eighth century, if not still earlier. I prepared a paper on this subject, filled with research, and published it, but, though I got a few faithful adherents, the bulk of our body flouted and scouted it.

“ ‘ Now, now,’ he said, ‘ is my day of triumph. I have, at length, found indisputable proof ; and they that bitterly opposed me will be confuted and con-

founded. And such a magnificent discovery could not fall in my way at a more opportune time than the present. It is the one great thing needful to popularise me, and carry me into the presidentship of the British Association with an overwhelming majority ! My election is now secure ; and for that great triumph I have you, Mr. Rafferty, to thank ; you, and the House of St. Molaisé.'

" No baby that had got a new rattle was ever in such raptures as was Sir Joshua with this House of St. Molaisé ; and surely if he was delighted Miss Kitty was overjoyed ; and I believe, in my heart, that if she had got the slightest encouragement she would have thought little of covering my friend Conn with kisses ; and I have seldom seen a happier man than my friend, Conn, himself was then.

" I was in a bit of a quandary myself, for, in all the years I had known Conn, and all the times I had been coming to the island of Innis Fad, and with all the particulars and details I knew of it in all my comings and goings before, I had never heard of the House of St. Molaisé, and this puzzled me a good deal ; but I said nothing 'till I got a quiet slip of Conn. And when I said this to him, he only told me mysteriously, ' Whisht, whisht, keep your mouth shut.' And thinking it better to do so, I obeyed.

" Sir Joshua just stayed three days more on the island. If he had stayed any longer I was afraid myself his head would go turned ; for, all of them three days he hadn't a minute to spend away from his great discovery. The House of St. Molaisé was breakfast,

dinner, and supper to him, and drinks between meals. And he would almost, if we had let him, sleep by it overnight, for he seemed to have a trembling dread lest, when his eyes would not be on it, something or other might whisk it away, and his wonderful discovery disappear for ever.

" But, during them three days, Conn was making the most of his time ; and he had now every opportunity, for Miss Kitty had suddenly grown rapturously fond of him ; and he stuck to her so that myself could scarcely get as much as five minutes' chat with him all the day long, to ask him how things were going. And, when I did get a couple of minutes with him before turning into bed, he only told me—and he as radiant as an August sun with delight—that everything was going as smooth as soap, and begged of me not to say or question him upon anything yet awhile.

" And when, at the end of the three days, Sir Joshua and Miss Kitty went off, bound in hot haste for London, till he would prepare his great paper, and publish to the antiquarian world his immortal discovery, she had consented to correspond with my friend, Conn, and they each engaged to write a daily letter to the other. And then I saw, to my delight, that everything was going to be all right, and Conn would get landed on a safe and soft place at last. And correspond they did, every day of them, and she let Conn know that the prospects for her father's election were brighter and brighter every day ; and that as soon as his wonderful pamphlet on the House of St. Molaisé was published, Dr. Ketchem would scuttle out of the field, and her

father be swept into the presidency of the British Association on the high tide of unprecedented popularity.

“ Conn begun to let wee hints of tenderness creep into the endings of his letters ; and, far from offending Miss Kitty, she began to reciprocate.

“ Then Sir Joshua’s pamphlet came out, and there was a wonderful sensation entirely, created amongst antiquarians ; and the hundreds who had a short time afore been bitterly opposed to him on the lime-mortar question, were suddenly silenced and confounded, and he, himself, and his disciples triumphant. And immediately after, it was decided that the antiquarian section of the British Association should take their annual trepin the next month (and just on the eve of the presidency election) and that this time their tour would be in the West of Ireland, that they might see for themselves the wonderful House of St. Molaisé, on the island of Innis Fad, with its externally splayed window, and its lime-mortar binding.

“ And Miss Kitty wrote this news to Conn in rapturous delight, for she was rejoiced ; and even conceded that she was rejoiced beyond expression at the thought of seeing, so soon again, one who had been the means of fetching such great and grand luck to her beloved, poor father.

“ And, then, poor Conn himself was in throes of delight ; and I myself was little behindhand when he communicated the news to me ; for I had gone off from him again, before this, and had returned to my work. However, I arranged to strike Innis Fad at

the same time as the antiquarian section of the British Association should, and be there for Conn's final triumph; for, we had decided—himself and me—that he was to take this grand opportunity of working up to the point, and offering to bestow on Miss Kitty Copley his hand and heart. He requested me to come, because he wanted someone to stand by him in the emergency, and help to fortify him and keep his spirits up, as he said he well knew I could.

“And the big day came for the arrival of the antiquarian section of the British Association, and themselves and myself struck Innis Fad close about the same hour. And that was the biggest day was ever seen on the island, either before or since. And every soul on the island—man, woman, and child—gathered to see the strangers and to bid them welcome, though the sorra ha'porth the poor people knew what the dickens it was all about, anyway.

“And, after a grand lunch, which Conn had provided for the visitors, was disposed of, all hands proceeded to the House of St. Molaisé. And the delight of those old chaps, who had come to the time of day, one would think, when they would have more sense, the delight of them, I say, when they saw and examined that house was more than I could try to picture to ye.

“I am not telling exact truth though, for, to be strictly accurate, there was two or three individuals; including Dr. Ketchem, that were all the colours of the rainbow, and several more with jealousy and spitefulness, instead of being radiant with delight.



The delight of those old chaps was more than I could try to picture to ye.

But Sir Joshua himself looked like a man on a holiday from heaven ; and Miss Kitty, too, kept close by Conn's side all the time, radiating from her such a halo as would dim a saint's.

" There were many speeches made by the side of the house ; all of them thanking and praising and congratulating Sir Joshua Copley on his astounding good luck on having made such a renowned discovery, that, the orator said, ' would cause his name to echo, and re-echo, far down the resounding corridors of time.' And the astonished poor people of the island, who stood at a respectful distance, gazing open-mouthed, and wondering what it was all about, were then called forward.

" And Sir Joshua, in a simple speech, of which the words were admirably adapted to the supposedly limited understanding of an unlettered audience, endeavoured to impress upon them the honour and glory with which their island was haloed by the possession of this remarkable ruin, the only one of its kind, he said, now extant in Western Europe. He reminded them that it had stood there for thirteen hundred years, a monument to the good saint who had helped to spread amongst their forefathers, long gone, the light of the Christian religion.

" He told them it had been a silent witness of the many and wonderful changes that had swept over Ireland in them thirteen centuries. That it had seen the coming of the Dane, and his temporary triumph and ultimate destruction. And it had also seen the coming of the Saxon, and the Saxon's triumph. And

though he, as a Saxon, could not wish it, it might yet witness, too, the destruction and disappearance of the last Saxon from the soil of Ireland.

"And he warned these good people that it was their duty and their interest to look after and preserve this magnificent relic, and to see that no hand of Goth should ever interfere with it. He also said that it was a proper thing to collect and preserve every little scrap of tradition referring to this house which had filtered down the centuries, and, as his friend, Mr. Rafferty, was, unfortunately, not well posted in the traditions, and consequently unable to supply him with many of the ancient tales that must be current about it, he now made an earnest appeal to these people to let himself and his companions hear some few of the old legends that clung around this ancient house of the holy St. Molaisé.

"He pointed his finger at one grey-headed old islander, who stood in the front of the crowd, and he said, 'Of you, my friend, who seem surely one of the oldest, and at the same time, most intelligent of this intelligent gathering of inhabitants, which I have the honour and pleasure of seeing before me, I beg that we may hear what you know of this wonderful monument.'

"Now I should say that, from the visitors landed upon the island, Conn Rafferty had been doing his level best to scare away the inhabitants by saying that these were people come to gather taxes. But much as they feared taxes, their natural curiosity overcame them and made them, in spite of Conn's

surreptitious efforts and mine, follow the visitors step by step, and hang upon their flank wherever they went. And when Sir Joshua's discourse took this turn I looked at Conn Rafferty, and I saw the eyes growing wild in his head, and I felt for the poor fellow, and I got into a scare myself for him.

"I edged round the old man in the crowd, and I gave him a dig in the ribs to frighten him out of giving a straight answer. But the sorra use it was. He thought I struck him by accident, and he just moved off from me a bit, and spoke up as promptly as a scholar rhyming his lesson, and says he, 'Kind stranger, neither myself nor me friends here undherstans very well what this is all about. We think yous is very nice, kind, people entirely, and we bid yous a hundred thousand welcomes to Innis Fad, and hope you'll come back soon and often.'

"'But the house,' says Sir Joshua, 'this house—the house of the Saint. We want to hear what you know about it—what you heard your grandfathers and grandmothers tell you about it round the fireside, when you were children.'

"'Tell me, kind stranger,' said the old fellow, 'what Saint's house are ye talkin' about?' Myself got up to him and jogged him again, but his head was as thick as a beetle, and you'd need a mallet and spike to drive a hint into it. He never minded me at all one bit.

"'This house,' says Sir Joshua, impatiently, putting his hand on it. 'This house here—don't you see it?—The house of the Saint—St. Molaisé.'

"The old man, with a deal of puzzle in his coun-

tenance, looked from Sir Joshua to the house, and from the house back again to Sir Joshua. Then he said, ' You'll maybe excuse me, sir, but meself doesn't rightly understand ye yet. I'm old, as ye see, and a wee bit stupid. As regards that rickle there, if you're referrin' to it, I'll tell ye what I know about it. I'm fourscore years and odd now, and I was married at five and twenty; and it was the Hallowmas afore I was marri'd that old Peter Donaghy—(May the Lord have marcy on his sowl! He's dead this forty years)—built that craw as a shelter for his donkey.'

" I never in all my life, afore or since, witnessed such consternation as took hold of that party of antiquarians; but I didn't wait long enough to witness the whole thing, for, finding that Conn Rafferty had suddenly disappeared the minute the thunderbolt fell, and hid himself, likely, in some cave or other, I considered it was only common sense to look out for a cave for myself. And I got one, and I kept there till the inhabitants, twelve hours after, getting the alarm that we were lost, came searching for us and rooted us out, and informed us that the tax-gatherers were all gone, and that they didn't ask to lift any taxes; but that there was the terriblest hubbub and squabbling among them as they went away that ever was known; and that the old fellow who had made the big speech got very white and forlorn-looking; and had to be armed down to the boat; and that his daughter looked very wild entirely, and had gone to Mr. Rafferty's and searched the house for him before she went off; and that there was one very generous and gentlemanly



There was the terriblest hubbub and squabbling among them as they went away.

man in the party who stole back and put a gold guinea into the hand of the old man of four-score years and odd ; I got his description, and it was Dr. Ketchem.

“ I learned afterwards from the papers, that Dr. Ketchem was elected unopposed to the presidency of the British Association.

“ Poor Conn Rafferty was very dejected for a long time after. And he turned out a terrible woman-hater entirely ; and he lived and died a bachelor. Although as you all see, lads, he was very, very near winning a woman and five thousand a year.”

A WIFE FOR JACK DEMPSEY

GETTING a wife for Jack was a quare thing, surely. The people that write stories would call it a wonderful romance. And it's another proof that truth is stranger than fiction.

Yes, it's going to tell it, I am, or why should I mention it? I'm one of those chaps that don't see any humanity in dangling a carrot before a donkey's nose to make him go.

Jack's wife, as all of you know that have seen her, still shows signs—with all her three score and ten of years—of having been an uncommon-looking woman in her day.

The day I talk about now is every year of fifty gone, if it is a month. And, Heaven help me, to look back, boys, it's wonderful how them fifty have chased one another.

It's half a dozen years, lads, since we drew the green quilt over Jack, and all of you know that a doubled up old man, and not worth much, he looked. At the time I talk of, Jack was in his prime, about seven or eight and twenty years of age. He was as straight as a spear, and as strong as a tower, and as handsome as any bit of God's handiwork that it was my pleasure to see before or since, and had all the dash and spirit which every young Irishman has when

he allows his heart to play at ninepins with his head. His poor father, he died the very year Jack come of age, and his mother he never remembered at all, at all, for he was in the cradle when she went. And his father when he gave up the ghost, left Jack all the lands of Brenter and half of Cruach—with more hoofs on them than a schoolmaster might count of a Saturday—and didn't leave him anyways ill-off for hard cash, moreover.

And as Jack was ever the broth of a boy, never kept his heart in his purse, loved a laugh and a lark and a jolly companion, and had a loose foot and a fellow for it, I can assure you the world wasn't all winter to him.

With all this it astonished the boys to see the grief was on him for the first twelve months after his poor father died. And people saw that, with all his gaiety and lightheartedness, there was a man with a heart—and a good one—underneath Jack Dempsey's skin.

He was a bit wild, there's no doubt—some went so far as to say reckless—but he was that charitable that he would give the shirt off his back to a poor man. And his worst enemy—if he had such—never mentioned meanness and the name of Jack Dempsey in the one breath.

Well and good. When Jack's father was out of the road, and Jack himself had come into all his wealth, he was, as you may well suppose, looked upon by all the match-making mothers of some means in the country as a fine catch. And every one of them

just knew the very girl that would suit him ; and his poor father wasn't yet cold in the grave when these women were, like so many spiders, busy spinning webs, and trying to draw him into them. But Jack, brave boy, it was well he saw through them, and he turned up his nose at every fine daughter that was thrown at him.

He followed his own bent, did Jack, and, forasmuch as he was not only as handsome as I tell ye, but had likewise the real deludhering way with him among the women, and, moreover, treated the poorest pretty girl in the countryside as if she was a queen's daughter, he had more girls than you might wag a stick at of a midsummer day.

I'll admit that the average run of the girls in this country, the day, isn't half bad ; but in them days there was as plentiful a crop of pretty girls in Banagh as you'd find between the four seas—and further. They were a delight to look at, and the man who couldn't pick to his pleasement among them deserved transportation to Timbuctoo, and a nigger woman at the end of it.

And of these pretty ones, I'm keeping well within the truth, boys, when I say that Bridget Durneen, who was both barmaid and manager of the " Boar Hound " for Lanty O'Callaghan, wasn't the least winsome by a very long chalk. And far and above that, she wasn't one of the girls that show their whole stock in the window. Bridget's good qualities, to them that knew her, were as good as her good looks, if not better. She had been orphaned from when

she was fifteen, but she faced the world, and fought it, and always, by God's grace, came out on top.

With this Bridget, as you may guess, Jack Dempsey loved his joke and a half-hour's crack. At the "Boar Hound" he always put up when he come into town—which was pretty often. And he gathered in his comrades and spent there many a merry evening. Jack, he paid his attentions to Bridget as he would to any other pretty girl, if he met her on Popocatpetl, and, of course, had no more serious intentions, or any more mind of marrying, than he had of driving to the next horse market in the moon.

The first thought of settling down hadn't come to trouble his head, yet. And, for her part, Bridget, though she had come to find out the fine qualities he had under his humbug, had no more bothered her head about him than about the poorest boy in the parish, or given him one smile more.

But, behold ye, there was a Patrick's night come round, and Jack and the boys had got up a dacent bit of a dance. Everyone fetched a girl to it, and Jack, he fetched Bridget Durneen; and a rattling fine night it was, with no end of innocent fun and enjoyment. And there wasn't a light-hearteder, nor a gayer, nor, maybe—if I said it—a prettier, girl there than Bridget. And Jack, he was in fine merry form himself, and pleased and proud he was to see Bridget look so well.

And tor'st morning, when the dance should be near about breaking up, Jack had taken Bridget into a

little screened-off refreshment place, where he was getting her a bottle of lemonade.

Bridget joked and laughed heartily with him over the fun of the night, and Jack, as wasn't an uncommon thing with him, begun flirting with her ; and everything he said she bid him back with a witty answer. And, as they were about to get up and leave, Jack he had his arm around her as quick as I could say it, and kissed her.

And before he knew where he was he was stung across the eyes with a slap of her open hand that showed him more stars than ever grew in the sky. She had drawn herself from him, and drawn herself up, looking scorn enough at him to scorch his soul, and the colours chasing each other through her face, like shadows and sunshine over a cornfield on a windy day.

Poor Jack, in wonder, dropped into a seat dumfounded ; and, with another scathing look she swept past him, and was gone out, alone, before he gathered his wits ; and she had got on her cape and her hat, and got her cousin, Dan Moroney of the Hillhead, to leave her home.

When Jack had gathered himself together he hurried after her to the " Boar Hound," and, like the manly fellow he was, showed his sorrow, and offered his apologies, which she listened to, like a lady, and thanked him, and wished him good-night politely.

You never, in all your life, saw as dumfounded a lad as Jack was for a week and a day after that passage.

" By gum," he acknowledged to the boys when

they twitted him, " my opinion of Bridget Durneen was never small, but now it has gone up into the ninety-nines. She's a girl in a thousand, she is."

" That's right, Jack," the boys said, " it's proper for ye to pretend to take it that way."

" Pretend ! " says Jack. " No, I'll prove it ; for," said he, electrifying the audience with the announcement, "*I'm going to make that girl Mrs. Dempsey !*"

Sudden and extraordinary as the announcement was, there wasn't a man of them who doubted but he meant it ; for it was ever his way to do extraordinary things sudden, and it was ever his way, also, to keep his word, or bre'k his neck in the attempt, if he proposed to hand ye down a star—that was Jack. So it was small wonder he astonished his audience.

" And," he said, " I'm going to bre'k the news to her the morrow evening, boys. I want you not to think that this is one of my mad fits, done in a sudden, to be wrought out in sorrow. There was never any girl I thought so much of as Bridget ; though I never wakened to this myself, till I got that slap across the face from her. A stunnin' fine wife she'll make, boys. And you fellows had better make the most you can of Jack Dempsey now, for he'll soon be a changed man, and it's little you'll see of him in bar-parlours."

" Do you mean to say," says one of the boys, " that you haven't talked to Bridget herself on the subject yet ? "

" Not yet, not yet," says Jack, says he, " that's all right, and 'll be time enough."

It was just like Jack's assurance, and the boy whistled.

The next morning as he had to ride over to Donegal on business, he killed two birds with one stone, by dropping in also on Father Phil, and getting the marriage license and arranging for the event to take place on the second morning after.

Then, in the evening, when he got home, and had his dinner, and a look over the farm, to see that all was going well, leaving all orders with old Maurice Higgins, who was his land steward, he rode off to the "Boar Hound."

He handed over his horse to the *buachaill* when he arrived, and walked right straight through the house, out of one room and into another, looking for Bridget.

It was in the kitchen he found her, where she was standing over Mary Hannigan to see that Mary properly plucked a pair of geese she had killed.

And, "Bridget," says he, taking her hand and giving it a warm shake, "I have been looking for you all over the house."

"Which was very foolish," says Bridget, a wee bit tart, "for I'm never in more than one place at a time. And now you see me I hope you are satisfied?"

"Bridget," says he, soothingly, "let us forgive and forget all old scores. I'm come to take you to the Mullinafad concert to-night."

For, sure enough, that very night there was to be a great concert and a play, in which Bridget was to take part, in Eamon Mor's barn, of Mullinafad.

"It's a kind thought, indeed," says she. "And

you'll have my thanks, but not myself—for Dan Moroney has me bespoke."

"And," says he, not minding this much, "I have come to ask for your congratulations."

"On what, I would like to know, am I to congratulate you, Mr. Dempsey?"

"On going to get married," says he, "and I have come to bid you to the wedding."

"Oh, indeed!" says Bridget.

Mary Hannigan said, after, that Bridget looked just the slightest wee bit taken aback.

"I thank you heartily. And, may I ask, who is the happy woman?"

"She's one you know well," says he, "and I'll give you three guesses."

But poor Bridget shook her head, and she said:

"Oh, not a one of me could guess. Tell me who she is, for I should hope that you would get a good wife."

"I'm going to get," says Jack, says he, "the best wife in the County Donegal, and you'll acknowledge that, yourself, when you hear who she is."

Says she: "I'm happy to know it, and I'm anxious to hear her name."

"Well, her name," says he, "is Bridget Durneen. You're the girl herself. Tell me what you think of my choice?"

"Mr. Dempsey," says Bridget, "I wish you would sometimes have less joke and more truth with ye. Can't you tell me who the woman is? Or are you going to get married at all?"

"Upon my solemn veracity, Bridget, it's the downright truth I'm telling ye now."

"Botheration!" says she. "Get out of my way till I get to my work. I might have known there was nothing it in."

"Hold on a minute," says he, "and if my word doesn't convince you, let the scrape of Father Phil's pen do it. There you are, and read that."

And when Bridget looked into the license and saw her own name with his, in it, for marriage, she got pale to her lips and she said: "I thought you were a gentleman, Mr. Dempsey; but this is no gentleman's joke."

"Oh, Bridget, Bridget," says he, "sure there isn't a joke at all in it. It's dead downright in earnest I am, the Lord knows. Please God—and you—we'll be married the morrow morning." And, seeing Bridget draw herself up and look mighty terrible, as she said this, he added: "Sure it isn't refuse me you would do, Bridget Durneen?"

Says she, straight back to him, in as cutting a voice as she was capable of: "To refuse you, Jack Dempsey, you haven't given me the chance; but, lest you might be tempted to put yourself in the way of another slap in the face," says she, "don't have the impertinence to give me the chance. And now, sir," says she, "allow me to attend to my business. Good mornin'."

And off she went, leaving Jack dumfounded, standing there, with Mary Hannigan, in the middle of the kitchen, and a swirl of goose feathers.

And when he come to himself—which he didn't do

in a minute—the eyes of him begun to blaze, and he marches off after Bridget, till he discovered her in the bar, and there he said : “ Bridget Durneen, do you have me, Jack Dempsey, or do you not ? ”

And Bridget Durneen said back to him : “ Jack Dempsey, there is the door. Go ! ”

Said he then : “ This is Tuesday night. Before I left home I sent a message to Father Hugh M’Neilly to hold himself in readiness to marry me, at half-past eight in the morning of the day after the morrow, and if you think that Jack Dempsey is going to bre’k off his marriage on account of Bridget Durneen, you’re badly mistaken ; for,” says he, fetching his fist down hard on the bar-counter, and making Bridget Durneen and the glasses jump, “ *by all the powers, the first girl I meet the morrow morning, be she beggar or pauper, her I’ll marry.*” And he gave Bridget a nod, and marched out.

And Bridget Durneen knew enough of Jack Dempsey to know that he meant what he said, and that he would keep his word though he should suffer for it all his life after.

And when she was telling Dan Moroney, when he come in straight after, and found her—what no one had ever found her before—in tears, the mad thing that Jack Dempsey was about to do with himself, she gave in that it wasn’t for the way she had been insulted she cried, at all, but just for Jack Dempsey’s sake ; for, though she had never said it, nor shown it, there wasn’t a young man ever she had met that she thought so much or so highly of, in her heart, as the



same Jack ; for she knew the good heart, and generous and gentlemanly one, he had underneath all his foolishness and eccentricities, and now he was going to ruin his life.

Well, that fared well—as they say in the stories—and it didn't fare ill. And Jack Dempsey rode home a purty mad man, and a determined one.

The news was before him here that his Uncle Richard, up in Tyrone, five-and-thirty miles away, was waiting on death, and that, though Jack had fallen out with him, and given him the go-by five years before, the uncle, who was a very rich man, was now making his will in Jack's favour, and was wanting to see him before he would die. And Jack told Maurice Higgins, his man, to call him at four o'clock in the morning, and have the bay filly saddled, and he would ride off.

And at half-past four the next morning, when there was no other light than starlight in the sky, and wouldn't be for two hours to come, Maurice Higgins was letting Jack out of his own gate, and closing the gate after him. "Maurice," says Jack, says he, turning his horse on the road, and calling after Maurice.

"Well, sir?" says Maurice.

"I'm going to be married the morrow morning, Maurice, at half-past eight o'clock."

"Lord bless us, sir!" says Maurice.

"At half-past eight o'clock, I say," says Jack, sternly. "Father Hugh M'Neilly is to marry me in his own house, for I wanted the thing quiet. I hadn't time to ask the boys and girls," he added. "You will

go and ask them to-day, after you get your breakfast, so as to give them plenty of time to prepare. You know the boys and girls I would like to see. Ask ten couples of them—that'll be plenty—and be very sure that Bridget Durneen is one of the parties asked. They are to go to Father Hugh's, tell them, and to be there in good time. I will ride back, and I'll join them there on the stroke of half-past eight—if not earlier. If the wife's there before me they are to be good to her till I come."

"For mercy's sake, sir," says Maurice, says he, in consternation, "who is the wife going to be?"

"Higgins," says he, "I don't know who she's to be—and I don't care. You have got your orders, do them, and mind your own business."

Then Jack had turned his horse again, and was away with himself.

He had only reached the Munterdoynney cross-roads, two miles from home, when in the dark he thought he was meeting someone. But before he had met them they turned down the Culcam road. They were, evidently, a courting boy and girl coming home from a dance after its break-up in the morning.

"Hagh!" says he.

But behold ye, when he took his eyes off them, and looked ahead again, here was a single individual coming after them, towards him.

"A woman, too, by all that's mighty!" says he. "The devil evidently doesn't mean to give me a long lease."

She seemed to get close under the shadow of the hedge as he come up.

He bent down and peered into the shadow, to see if he could see what sort his wife was going to be. It was starlight, as I said before, and he gathered to his satisfaction, anyhow, or his dissatisfaction—if ye like it that way better—that she was a stout, sturdy, rough and healthy farmer's daughter, that knew how to rear pigs, even if she couldn't play the piano, wearing no hat on her head, which was well enough covered with a load of yellow hair, but just a bit of a plaid shawl about her shoulders, and a ribbon about her neck, and in short skirts and brogues.

"Good-night," says he. "And you are coming home from the spree?"

"Good-night," says she, "I am," and she wanted to move on.

"Excuse my impertinence," says Jack. "May I ask who you are?"

But she didn't seem too ready with her answer.

"I have a reason for it," says he.

Says she: "I'm Molly Maglone of the Long Bog, the turf-cutter's daughter."

Jack, in his life before, had never heard tell of the Long Bog, or of the turf-cutter's daughter—but no matter.

"Ho, ho," says he that way to himself, "we'll not freeze in the winter, anyhow." Says he, "Do you know who I am?"

Says she: "You are Mr. Dempsey, of Shannagh Big House, aren't you?"

"That's me," says he. "And why I have stopped you is," says he, "I am looking for a wife, and I wish to know will you marry me? See how early I have come out looking for you."



"Excuse my impertinence," says Jack. "May I ask who you are?"

"Oh, Mr. Dempsey," says she, "I always heard tell of you as a great joker, but it isn't worth your while

to be joking the turf-cutter's daughter at this hour of the morning. I am hurrying after my company. That boy and girl I was with," says she, " wanted to have a wee chat of their own, and I dropped behind them."

Says he : " Yet in case I wasn't joking, would you marry me ? "

She hesitated just a minute ; but next minute she answers him : " Would a duck swim if you threw it into water ? "

Without saying anything more he put his hand in his pocket, and pulled out some small little thing rolled up.

" And," says he, " here's a ring. If I put it on ye, will ye promise to meet me at Father Hugh M'Neilly's the morrow morning at half-past eight o'clock ? "

" Oh, now, Mr. Dempsey ! " says she.

" Will ye promise me," says he, " or will ye not ? "

Her eyes were starting ; but, " With a heart and a half," says she, " I'll promise ye that."

" Hold up your finger," says Jack, says he, " till I put the ring on it."

Then he drew out his pocket-book, and he drew some notes from it, and, says he : " Here's a couple of five-pound notes. I want you to get some dacent duds for yourself with them the day. Will you mind the place and the time ? " says he.

" Says she : " What do you take me for ? I wish you were as sure of heaven as of me being there in time."

" Then good-bye," says he. And he was off.

"I suppose," says Jack to himself, "she expected I would kiss her? But——" poor Jack gave his shoulders a shrug and his horse a spur.

And for all they were bitter laughs, it's many's the chuckle he gave to himself that morning as he rode into Tyrone.

"The turf-cutter's daughter! Ho, ho!" says he. "Molly Maglone, the turf-cutter's daughter! It has a fine sound, troth, and, no doubt, will amuse the boys. But for all that, the first man of them sneezes at her, I'll break his neck in more places than one doctor might mend in a lifetime. Well, well, Jack Dempsey," says he, "ye have fared far and lingered long, but you're mated at last—to Molly Maglone! the turf-cutter's daughter! from the Long Bog!—ay, from the Long Bog!" says he, that way. "A high-soundin' place for a summer residence."

He reached Tyrone, and his Uncle Richard's place, timely. And it was glad the Uncle Richard was to see him; for he always used to dote upon Jack, and, though he fell out with him, he never lost his fondness. And now he made his will, and left Jack every penny—every head and horn, stick and stave, that he owned. And I assure you, boys, that if yourselves and myself had the same fortune this night, we might never dread the workhouse.

It was calmly that Jack took it, though; for, true enough, poor fellow, his heart was never in the money. And he only said—and to himself he said it, of course, "That's a fine windfall for the turf-cutter's daughter."

His Uncle Richard was purty far through, but the

doctor allowed he might live a week yet. And Jack was glad to know this, for it made it the more easy for him to excuse himself, and start off again that night, telling the uncle that he had a most urgent business before him in the morning, but that he would be back within two days. And off he set again a couple of hours after nightfall, and was at home, and had Maurice Higgins out of his bed, and making a breakfast for him, before the stars were off the sky.

He packed Maurice off, first, to Briany Mullan's, the tailor's, for the new frock he had getting made there, and then off to Father Phil's, to Donegal, with the license, requesting Father Phil to scrape out the name of Bridget Durneen, and put into it Molly Maglone instead. And he got himself into his best toggery, and dressed himself better and finer, and with more particular care, than ever he had done in his life afore.

He fitted up Maurice, too, as soon as he come back, in his second-best suit, though, as he was a tall and stout man himself, and Maurice was a short and thin man, poor Maurice, when he was fitted in it, didn't look one bit of a dandy, I can tell you. And he fetched him with him to act as his best man. And off the both of them started for Father Hugh's, and got there when it was close upon the hinges of the half-past eight. And Father Hugh met them at the door and made them welcome, and took them in into his parlour, where, sure enough, there, before them, was the gathering of boys and girls, every mother's son of them, that Maurice had invited,

The only one that hadn't arrived yet, when he cast his eye round and bid them good morning, was, he saw, the turf-cutter's daughter. She got delayed somehow, for he no more doubted her coming, of course, than that there was a head on his body.

"Father Hugh," says he, "and boys and girls, I observe that the wife hasn't come to the scratch so far. But it's yet five minutes within the time, and we'll give her five minutes' grace."

There was terrible fidgeting and curiosity among the boys and girls. And not the least curious of all was Father Hugh himself. For it was the most wonderful thing they had ever heard tell of, and it was just like the devil that was in Jack Dempsey to do. And they one and all wondered, in whispers amongst themselves, who the dickens Jack's intended wife was, or what the sorra she was like, anyhow, and they could hardly keep their seats for the impatience.

"Maurice Higgins," says Jack, says he, after five minutes, "would you go out and look up and down the road, and see if you would see a lassie coming—a stout, strapping agricultural girl, with a head of hair the colour of them window blinds of Father Hugh's."

And Maurice went off and wasn't right away till he was in again, and said there was a gathering of agricultural-looking girls of all classes, with heads of hair every colour in the rainbow, gathered at the gate without, to see the wedding, and which of them was her Maurice couldn't rightly tell.

"Them's not girls come to see the wedding," says

Jack, says he, "but one of them's the one we're waiting on, and the others are her friends and bridesmaids. They're waiting to be asked in. Go out," says he, "and, with Father Hugh's leave, drive them into the room here."

"Surely, surely," says Father Hugh, says he, for he had a regular market-house of a room that was fit to hold a regiment.

So Maurice went out, and he told them that the master and Father Hugh, and the groom's party was waiting on them inside. And he flocked them in afore him, and they filed into the room—agricultural girls of all shapes and sizes, and, as Maurice had rightly said, every pattern of hair.

Now, when they come in, Jack, though he recognized all the neighbours that were among them, didn't know one from the other of the strangers, and couldn't say, at a glance, which of them was the girl to whom he spoke in the dark last night. But I suppose he hoped in his heart, anyhow, that it wouldn't be one of the very ugliest of them.

"Now, Father Hugh," says Jack, says he, "I think it's time to begin business."

So he walked up himself and he called up Maurice Higgins—his best man—to stand by him, and he whispered to Father Hugh.

And Father Hugh looked a bit upset for a minute, and says he: "I don't know the name, and I doubt she doesn't belong to this parish. She is one of Father Mat Carney's flock, I'll wager." And then, lifting his head, he called out: "Is Molly Maglone, the

turf-cutter's daughter of the Long Bog, amongst ye ? ”

And half-a-dozen of them—of the groom's own party, too—spoke up, and says : “ She is.”

And a titter got up and grew, and went round the room, again. And the thunder and lightning began to look out of Jack Dempsey's eyes.

“ Then,” says Father Hugh, “ why, in the name of patience, doesn't she drop her bashfulness, and step for'ard ? ”

“ Here she is,” says Billy Blaney and Mick M'Ardle, laying their hands upon, and shoving out of the crowd, a brave, sturdy girl.

“ This,” says the two lads, “ is Molly Maglone, the turf-cutter's daughter. We'll vouch for her, for that is the part she took in the play last night at the Mullinafad concert, and that's the part she danced in, in the dance, afterwards. That's the part she came there dressed in, and the part she went home dressed in—for we had no dressing-room at Mullinafad—and her better-known name,” says they, “ is, as you know, Bridget Durneen, of the ‘ Boar Hound.’ ”

If there was ever a completely astounded man stood in shoe leather, in my day, that man was Jack Dempsey, then and there. He was an astounded man one minute and the heartiest pleased-looking man that ever my two eyes saw the next minute.

“ Bridget Durneen,” says he, coming forward, “ if I was being taken up to heaven in a hand-basket I would step out of it, for the delight of this.”

Says Bridget, says she : “ Thank you.”

And she was neither laughing nor blushing, but looking very ladylike now. She took a ring off her finger, and says she, handing it to him : " This doesn't belong to me. You gave it to me in mistake in the dark last night."

" But, Bridget," says he, taking hold of her hand, " won't you, won't you, I beg of you, won't you allow me, now, in the full light of day, and in the eyes of Father Hugh, and the fifth of his parish, allow me to give it to you again without a mistake ? "

And with just the faintest wee bit of a struggle against it, Bridget let the ring go on !

On that very day month, again, all of us gathered in the same room at the marriage of Jack and Bridget, and a handsomer couple, or a happier, never walked out of that room before. And—for Jack was a reformed and a new man from the day of his engagement till the day of his death—a happier couple never lived, after—as they tell ye in the stories, but was pure fact here—than Jack Dempsey and his missus, the Turfcutter's Daughter.

THE TENANTRY OF LOCH MUCK

It was the time of the Loch Muck Great Drainage that the matter happened, and it was in regards of the same drainage that the whole matter come about.

Of course, yous all mind the Loch Muck Great Drainage? If yous don't, yous must have been dead or out of the world afore it happened.

Ye know that the Loch—Loch Muck—was in them days one of the biggest and best fishing lakes in all of the North-west of Ireland. And, by them that could judge the proper flies to use, there could be trout taken from that lake the size of small sucking-pigs. It had in it, moreover, the small char trout that's thought so much of, and that's so rare to be found in our waters. It was the great resort, at that time of the year, for gentry from London, and England, and all parts of the world. It was a purty odd thing, too, that, though it was in the middle of the barest and hardest barony in the County Donegal—a barony that, elsewhere, every acre would starve a snipe—the lands around Loch Muck, itself, that went sloping down to the waters, were as sweet and kindly, and grew as good crops, and fattened as fine calves as you'd maybe meet atween here and there.

But by reason the land was so good, the farms were very, very small, and every man had a struggle to live, and maybe wouldn't live at all, at all, only he had the outrun of the mountains above for sheep-rearin'.

Now, the landlord of the lands of Loch Muck he was one Major Monteith—a right ingenious sort of a lad entirely. And as the Loch lay upon high ground, among the uplands of Curraghmoan, and as it had, moreover, a beautiful bottom of the richest of black clay, the Major he conceived the idea of draining the Loch clean away, and dividing up its bottom among his tenants—every man's farm to run in, till they all met in the centre. And he called a meeting of the tenants and explained the plan to them, and asked them to co-operate with him; every man to do his share of the work and bear his share of the expense—which expense would be light, seeing that, as he planned it, nine-tenths of the work could be done by themselves—and, in return, every man, as I said, was to get a share of the Loch bottom, consenting, at the same time, to bear a small raise of rent in regards to the extra acres.

Well and good. That fared well, as the story says, and it didn't fare ill. And the tenants, too, though they were a bit jubious at first, took to the idea when they had talked it over, and got as enthusiastic about it as the Major's heart could wish. As soon as their own work was over, and the winter had set in, every man and boy of them was on the ground, with his spade in his fist, or a shovel or a pick, and cutting away a road for the water to run, under the personal super-

vision and direction of the Major. And slave like niggers in troth they did, every man jack of them, both that winter and the next. And by the time the end of the second winter came round, lo, and behold ye ! ye couldn't get as much water in Loch Muck as would wash your pocket-handkercher, if you had one ; for, to the wonder of the world and the countryside, the whole Loch was drained away, out and out, and only a little bit of a stream trickling down through the centre of the district, hardly enough to sarve a Stillhouse.

And then when all things were ready to divide up the land among them that reclaimed it, what do you think did the Major do but die, and let his whole estate, including Loch Muck, go into Chancery. The poor tenantry, who had little logic and less law, set about dividing up the reclaimed lands among themselves. And peaceably and agreeably and satisfactorily they were doing it, till the devil tempted some begrudging individual—an outsider—to send a letter to the Court of Chancery about it ; and a couple of the woolly-headed chaps there sent down an order forbidding the tenants, under all sorts of pains and penalties, to take what was their own, or to divide up the land, that they themselves, as it were, created with the pick and the shovel, and the sweat of their brows. And them that opened their mouths in wonder at this order—and it was few who didn't—had not them closed again when a second order come down on the heels of it to say that the Court was going to sell the reclaimed lands—put them up for auction on

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a certain date named, and give the tenantry a chance to purchase, and pay the piper for land that belonged to them as rightly and surely as the bend of their own elbows.

And that was the play !

The poor people they were consternated, and it's well they might be so, for they used to have a notion, up till that, that law was something to protect the rights of the people. And after they had come together and debated the thing every night for a week, they come to a conclusion—the one and only conclusion they could come to—and that was that they should send for the celebrated Attorney Phil Rogan, fetch him to the ground, lay the case afore him, and let him see for himself, and then direct them what was best to do. For, as they very well and wisely said, there was no other man in the North, or, for that part of it, between the bounds of Ireland, that could so well not only give them the law and the rights and justice of the case, but direct them what was best to be done—and then do it for them himself. For, as all of yous have heard from your fathers, boys, about the wonderful Phil, he had such a clever head on him that there was nothing atween the bindings of law books he didn't know, and nothing within the limits of law or the bounds of possibility that Phil couldn't do. In a just cause he could blindfold the Judge on the bench, and prove to any jury in the land that black was intermediate between gogram-grey and sky-blue. As he once said himself, the time he released the Glenaney boys, "Only give him a keyhole and

he'd drive an ass and a load of turf through it." That was Phil for ye, and the Loch Muck men decided well when they come to the conclusion to call him in without any delay.

Then they sent for Phil and fetched him to the ground, and showed him and told him all was to be known on the matter. And when he had listened, and looked at all, and took all in, quietly, without a word out of him, and when they then asked him, " Now, Mr. Rogan, what 's your opinion on this case," he was still thinking for five minutes, and all the men of Loch Muck were standing round with their mouths open, waitin' to hear their fate.

At last he lifted his head, and, says he : " My good people, my opinion is that yous have on your side all the right and justice atween here and heaven "—and he had here to hold up his hand to keep them from splitting the skies with a cheer—" but," says he, finishing, " not as much law as would lift a louse over a straw." And then every face in his audience was as long as a Meentimor mile.

" And so," says they, " you can do nothing for us, Mr. Rogan ? "

" I didn't say so," says he, shortly. " I'll have a try, anyway. And if we lose the fight, we're going to drop with our backs to the wall. Put the whole affair in my hands, leave it to me, and do as I bid ye."

And right readily they consented to this.

The first thing Phil Rogan did was to drive home as fast as post-horses would carry him, and write out

and send to every newspaper in the country, a full statement of the case of the rights of the Loch Muck men, and the rascality of the Court of Chancery, and dare any moneyed man in Ireland—or out of it—to have the audacity and the meanness to come forward and buy up over their heads the tenants' own property, that was wrested from waste by the labour of their own hands, and reclaimed by the sweat of their own brows.

The papers took it up hot-foot ; for it was one of the glaringest cases of injustice that had been heard of in a hundred years, and they wrote articles on the subject as if they had contracted for them by the square perch, till the whole country was fairly fired up in the matter, and they were making matters lively for the lads in the Court of Chancery and marring the market for them.

The sale, which was to be an absolutely unreserved one, was to have come on in three weeks' time ; but in less than half that, no man in Ireland with a patch of decency in the body of him, would take a present of the Loch Muck land, let alone pay down hard money for it.

The Loch Muck men—as you may well suppose—were happy inside their skins at the way matters went. As for Phil, he was sitting smiling in his office and calculating, poor fellow, on another victory for Ireland and Justice. But it was eating his scone before it was baked he was.

Five days afore the day of the auction there was a lad suddenly lit upon the scene, and, taking the estate

bailiff with him, went out to look over the reclaimed lands of Loch Muck. And, after a day's tramping, when he returned again, in the evening, to Cnocher MacMenamin's hotel, in Donegal, he told straight that he was a valuer come down from Dublin, sent by Dr. McGaffey to look at the land and give an opinion on it ; for that McGaffey was thinking of investing some loose change in it if he got it a bargain.

And when Phil Rogan and the Loch Muck men heard this it would be hard to tell which of them was the maddest, for Phil knew this old McGaffey well by repute. He was a cranky old judge in the Four Courts of Dublin ; known and noted far and wide as a niggardly, miserly, miserable creature, who would skin a flea if he could sell the hide. And it seems that when McGaffey heard the hubbub that was raised over the Loch Muck land, and seen in all the papers the denunciations and condemnations of any scoundrel who would attempt to purchase the land over the tenants' heads, he seen that it was a grand opportunity for a good investment ; for there would be few or no one else, in Ireland, to offer for them, and he'd have a dead bargain.

Phil Rogan was in a quandary, and he wrote off post-haste to a barrister friend he had in Dublin, a lad who knew Dr. McGaffey like his own left hand, and asked him to find if McGaffey was bent on buying, and, in case he was, what did he consider Phil should do to prevent him.

And in three days' time from that he had an answer back from his barrister friend, who said he had sounded

old McGaffey himself on the subject, and he meant to have the lands of Loch Muck by hook or by crook, because he considered they would go for a song. He said he pointed out to McGaffey that there wasn't a decent man in Ireland—or outside of it—who would bid for the lands under the circumstances.

"And sure," says McGaffey, says he, "that's what 'll leave me the better bargain; it's the reason I'm going in for them." The barrister likewise told Phil that, owing to the sittings of the courts, McGaffey couldn't leave there sooner than the second day afore the auction, and he had laid out his plans to reach Donegal on the night previous, and drive out next day to the sale. And he told Phil that, as regards preventing the old rascal from purchasing, there was no way he could do it, barrin' either he would shoot him, or give him a contagious disease. For it was a well-known fact that this old miser, who respected neither God nor the divil, lived in mortal terror of two things only, and they were disease or death, and he would go ten miles round sooner than pass a fevery house.

When Phil got this news he made strict inquiry, but found that, as ill-luck would have it, there wasn't a disease to be had handy in the neighbourhood for love or money, and hadn't been since six months afore when Jimmy the Joker's whole family was taken with the maises. And as for shooting the old scoundrel, he consented that, together with other inconveniences, it might be mighty bothersome.

"And so, Mr. Rogan," says the Loch Muck men,

says they, "we're beaten, and the land's lost to us!"

"Do you think so?" was all Phil said by reply.

"Don't you think so?" says they.

Says Phil, says he, "I have ever made it a habit not to cry for my cake till after it's snapped, and the same I recommend to yous. Phil Rogan came bright out of more bothersome corners than this and isn't now able to get the better of this old scoundrel McGaffey, he'll curse his trade and quit it, the mornin' after." Then he sent the Loch Muck men off. But, for all their faith in Phil, they had faces as long as your arm, and were shaking their heads dolefully.

Very well and good; though Phil now sent letters to all the papers again, letting them know that old Dr. McGaffey was going to do the dishonest trick that no other man between the bounds of Ireland could be found to do; and though the papers raised a *rooly-booly* over it, and held the old Judge up to ridicule and scorn, and warned and threatened him all sorts, old McGaffey, the rascal, only laughed and snapped his fingers at them. And as he had planned, on the morning of the second day afore the auction, he set out upon his journey and reached his journey's end—at least reached Donegal—upon the second night afore the sale. And his coach drew up at Dillon's Inn, and without giving any inkling of who or what he was, or what was his business, he got in his traps and took a room for the night.

Now Dillon's Inn was a great headquarters for all sorts of tourists and travellers. There was always a

great crowd about it, coming and going, and a mighty lot of lodgers, and the evening that the Judge come there was no exception, barrin' that, maybe, there was more than usual putting up at it. And a great tableful of men there was there from all arts and parts and the Judge sat down among them to a late supper ; but who the divil any of them was or what they were, McGaffey, of course, knew little and cared less. Only there was one chap come into the supper-room, just after the Judge had sat down, and Mick, the waiter, give him a chair right by the Doctor's lug, and addressed him every other minute as " Doctor." And, from scraps of conversation that Mick had with this doctor, back and forward during supper, the Judge gathered that his neighbour was a politician likewise as well as a medical man, and that he was going out to Loch Muck next day to observe the sale and see justice done to the tenantry. And McGaffey at this smiled inside his stomach ; and soon after he ordered a foot-bath to go to his room, and retired himself.

Well, behold ye, McGaffey might have been two, or maybe three hours in his bed, and was about snoring himself out of his first sleep, when there was a knock at the door ; and before he had time to say " Do it," or " Don't," the door opened, and who but Mick, the waiter, come in with a candle ; and, says he, " I humbly beg your pardon, Sir, for wakening ye, but I'm looking for a lawyer, on a life and death matter, and I wakened every gentleman in the house first, to see if he was one, afore I would disturb you, knowing that, as you drove far, and come late, you must have

been tired out and out. Might there be a chance, Sir, of you being a lawyer ? ”

“ What is the life and daith matter, Sir, for which you want law at this hour of the night ? ” McGaffey snaps out, for he was in no sweet temper at all at being wakened this way.

“ It’s a poor gentleman, Sir,” says he, “ that the sickness overtook, here, a week back, and he has been on the broad of his back since ; and to-night—bad manners to him !—he took the notion of dyin’ ; and he’s crying out for a lawyer to draw up his will, and ’ill have neither doctor nor clergy till he makes his mind easy on that first. He is a mighty liberal gentleman, Sir, and it ’ll be no sore nose to the lawyer attends him.”

McGaffey, when he heard this, was eager to be up. But, says he, first, “ What ’s the gentleman dying of ? ”

“ Oh ! just,” says Mick, says he, “ it is a kind of pleurisy that went astray and settled over his heart, and is killing him.”

“ Go at once,” says McGaffey, says he, “ and tell him to hold on, that there’s a first-class lawyer here ’ill be with him in a jiffy.”

And in a jiffy, sure enough, McGaffey had thrown himself into his trousers and coat, and was after Mick, and up, and into the sick room.

Mick had pens, ink, and paper, and everything that was necessary, on a table by the bedside. And, in the shaking of a donkey’s lug, Dr. McGaffey was earning his fee as fast and as loud as a pen could scratch.

He found that the dying man was a great landlord entirely in Connaught, owning several estates ; and as he went on giving out his will he opened the Judge's eyes more and more, for he was proving to be such a wonderfully rich man as the Judge thought Connaught couldn't produce. He owned as many properties as you could reckon on your fingers ; and, besides his landed property in Connaught, he owned a street in London, and a mine in Spain, and a bog in Scotland, and a block in New York—and the devil only knows what else. But he dumfounded McGaffey anyhow, as he went on dividing and bequeathing his property, his estates, his houses, his cattle, and his cash, between uncles and aunts, and step-sisters and step-mothers, and the Lord only knows how many more relations, out to seventh cousins.

And when he had all else divided, he inquired of the Judge for his name, and the Judge told him it. And by way of recompense to him for the trouble he give him, wakening him up in the middle of the night, he there and then bequeathed to the Judge at the tail end of the rest, fifty guineas in gold. And poor McGaffey nearly threw his arms about him and kissed him.

Mick went and wakened up witnesses, and brought them in, in a dress that wasn't suitable to a drawing-room, and had the document finished up in fine style entirely.

And McGaffey was almost ready to dance with delight round the dying man's bed.

Howsomever, the dancin' notion was very soon

driven out of his head ; for Mick he fetched in a doctor on the heels of the hunt ; and who should the doctor be but the very same lad whom McGaffey had found sitting beside him at the supper-table last night. And when he looked at the patient and looked at the patient's tongue, and found his pulse, and put three questions to him, he turned upon Mick a scowl that should wither him, and " Sir," says he to Mick, " how long has this poor fellow been lying here ? "

" Troth, an' he 's been ill for a week past, doctor," says Mick, says he.

" Sir," says the doctor, scowling blacker than afore, " it 's tried for your life I 'll have you, an' if the jury don't hang you I 'll think little of paying for some man to swing you myself."

" For what, Sir ? " says Mick.

And McGaffey he was looking on now all excited, and his mouth opened to hear what dreadful thing was the matter.

" Do you know, Sir," says the doctor, says he to Mick, " what this poor gentleman is suffering from ? "

" I don't," says Mick, says he. " What is it ? "

Says the doctor, says he, " He 's in the last stage of the smallpox."

" What ! " says Mick, says he.

And " W—what ! " says McGaffey, says he, with the breath cut short in his mouth.

" The last stage," says the doctor, says he again, " of the smallpox."

" Murder ! " says McGaffey, says he, turning the colour of the bed-sheet in the face.

"Murder," says the doctor, "is too aisy a name for it. Come with me, ye scoundrel ye," says he to Mick, "and fetch a lantern, and show me the way to Dr. Kilgannon's till I get some soothing medicine to ease the poor fellow's last hours. And you, mister," says he to McGaffey, "I don't know your name, but I, as a doctor, command you, under pains and penalties, to watch by this poor man's side till I return, lest he should take a notion of going off sudden in the meantime. No other mortal in the house is to be disturbed or notified of this till I come back, when I'll have the house sealed, and it, and all in it, put under quarantine; no one within to be allowed out, no nor one without to be allowed in, under the severest penalties of the law, till forty days after this poor fellow is either cured or killed—be that long or short.

And then he went off, himself and Mick.

McGaffey, who was the colour of the bed-sheet in the face, and trembling like a man in the ague, crawled out to the landing as quick as he could, and held his breath till he heard the door close after Mick and the doctor, and knew they were well gone. Then, as fast as his heels could carry him, he was off to his man's room, and had him wakened, and out with them both to the stables, where they had the horses harnessed and into the carriage in less time than I tell it to ye; and in a very few minutes more, were thundering and tearing like the hammers of Newgate out of Donegal on the high-road to Dublin.

The auction of the reclaimed lands of Loch Muck come off next day, and Phil Rogan was on the ground

in high feather; and on behalf of the tenantry he bid his right hand again his left—for he was the only bidder there—and bid it in for a song, and handed it over to its rightful owners.

As for Dr. McGaffey, he reached Dublin in quicker time than was made by coach on that road before or since. He took to his bed and had three doctors attending him three times a day for a fortnight, looking out for signs of the smallpox. At the end of that time the three presented him with a very handsome bill, and ordered him get on his feet and go about his business, or they would have him sent to a lunatic asylum.

But the bill in itself brought him to his feet, and, by way of helping to pay it, he wrote off to Donegal, to Mr. Dillon, of the Inn, asking to get the date and particulars of the death of the smallpox patient at his hotel, in whom he had an interest because he happened to be mentioned in his will.

And, by way of reply, Mr. Dillon, in a fine fury, ordered his attorney—who happened to be Phil Rogan—to institute law proceedings against the Judge—on two heads: one for trying to libel his hotel and damage his custom, as there hadn't been even so much as a headache known in his inn for the space of fifty years gone. And, in the second place, to prosecute him for swindle, he having skipped out of his lodgings in the clouds of the night to avoid settling his bill.

The upshot of it was that Judge McGaffey was glad to save his skin and hush the matter up by paying

Phil Rogan an extraordinary bill of costs, and making Mr. Dillon a full and ample apology.

He never again went in for speculating upon reclaimed lands, but spent a share of every day of his life, after, cursing reclaimed lands, Phil Rogan, and the tenantry of Loch Muck.

HOW THE DOCTOR MADE AN M.P. OUT OF BRIAN MULVENNY

No (said the Doctor when he had dined that night), there is neither fun, frolic, nor fight in an election these days, as compared with what there was in times when I was young and sprightly, and walked the world on the edge of my welt. Them was the grand ould times—may God be with them! for we'll never see the likes of them again. Them was the days when the oratory which carried an election, more often than not, barked from the mouth of a pistol, when a steady hand meant a deal more to a Parliamentary candidate than a wagging tongue—as nowadays—and when powder was a bigger help than principles. And over and above all that, too, there is no denying that ready wits often reckoned for more than both powder and principles.

Did I ever tell you, boys, how I made an M.P. out of Brian Mulvenny.

I didn't. Well, you have missed a capital bit of hith'ry, let me tell ye.

Now Brian was an old friend of mine, for whom I had a most particular regard, and would lay down my life, if need be. Indeed, he was a distant blood

relation, too, by my mother. My mother's name was M'Grath, but her mother again was connected with the Mulvennys, and come of the family of the Mulvennys of Lough Melville—the same that produced Brian. Our two mothers were as near as fourth cousins, if I mistake not, but myself never kept proper reckoning, for I was never no great shakes at counting kindred.

Anyhow, that has nothing whatsoever to do with the story ; for the big friendship between Brian and myself in our early days had come out of close comradeship at college, where the same lad was no small help to me in trouble. I owed him for many a coaching—and for something better still on two examination days.

There was not a chap in the school better liked than him, anyhow, for he was the good-naturedest sowl that ever broke bread. He would sell the shirt off his back to help a comrade in distress, and lay down his life for ye, afther.

And, when myself turned to medicine, and Brian went to the law—for which, to tell truth, he was ill-suited, for he was too honest and too generous-hearted by half—and though our ways parted here, our friendship was never colder ; and many's the good week of our vacations we spent together.

When, at length, I went to Donegal, a full-fledged doctor, with license to kill or cure as I saw fit, Brian had already started in Ballyshanny as a lawyer. We were no more than between thirty and forty miles off one another ; and this pleased us both mightily ;

for all the year round we could often meet and kill a day together.

And mortal useful to Brian this was, for he was such a good-hearted fellow that he surely needed some hard-headed boy, like myself, to advise him on occasion ; for among the cute people of Ballyshanny his good nature would soon have been the undoin' of him. And, though Brian, was three years older than myself, he was soon lookin' on me in the light of a father to him ; and he consulted me and took my advice upon all plans and schames.

Right well he got along in Ballyshanny, and as popular as a prince he became—as he deserved to be—for my brave Brian would have been idolised if he had begun practising among the naked savages in an undiscovered island of the ocean.

Now, at that time, the lad who was in Parliament for Ballyshanny was an old fogey named Colquhoun ; but, by the same token, he never troubled the Parliament, for he had the gout, and a complication of nine or eleven other complaints, I don't rightly mind which. He was a useless, good-for-nothin' oul' divil of a fellow, anyhow, and the sooner Ballyshanny was rid of him the better ; so he couldn't die too soon to please anybody.

Well, everyone, and their mother, knew the oul' codger was going to die, and so did Brian. And, as Brian was an ambitious boy, and a patriotic one, and had the rale interests of the country at heart, he got it into his head that he should wish to go into Parliament himself, and make his mark there, and do

some good for somebody ; for he was heartily disgusted with half the numskulls that was sent up to Parliament, fellows who carried the few brains they owned in their purses, and who didn't give a darned rap for poor Ireland or her interests.

Myself liked Brian's idea well, and I clapped him on the back and told him to go ahead. And, being as popular as I said he was, he had every hope of being the choice for Ballyshanny, first chance would arise.

I suppose it was purty uncharitable of me, but when I got word that old Colquhoun had at last kicked the bucket, I said : " Thank goodness ! " I took just two days to put things in shape, and then got a fortnight's holiday--that I had well and worthily earned. I threw two or three things together, and drove to Ballyshanny as if the divil was at my heels. And when I bounced into Brian Mulvenny in his own quarters, expecting to find him dancing with delight or standing on the crown of his head, I found the poor divil had a face on him like a yard stick.

" Well, old buck," says I, giving him a simmendable slap on the back, " what the dickens is the matter with ye ? You don't look one bit like a man who's goin' to make his mark in Parliament the morrow or next day."

" Nor do I feel like it, Ned Kilgannon," says he. " Didn't ye hear what's happened ? "

" Of course," says I. " Isn't that why I am here ? And isn't that why I thought to find you crowin' with joy. Of course I heard that Colquhoun was gone to--Heaven or somewheres. And I have taken

fourteen days' leave to come up to see you run into Parliament."

"Well," says Brian, with a mighty doleful headshake, "you had better be after extending your vacation by fourteen years if you want to act a friend's part, and see me safely in."

"What in the name of Nellie McGready's noggin do you mane?" says I.

"Old fellow," says he, "you have not heard the very latest, which is, that the corpse wasn't cold when two scoundrels from the Lord-knows-where—with more money than manners, anyhow—were on the ground as if they had dropped out of the skies, and 'seeking the suffrages of the free and independent electors of the grand old Borough of Ballyshannon,' as they put it."

"You don't mean it!" says I.

"Faith, and," says he, "I wish I didn't. The two lads' names are one of them Nowlan and the other Keaveney. So far as I can learn, they are darned old dead-heads, who have about as much patriotism as a boiled pratie. Keaveney, I believe, is a gombeen man from Westmeath, who made his money by lending, at twenty per cent., to poor men in distress, and taking mortgages on their property, and then selling the roof over their heads.

"He has more curses on his head, I'm told, than there's crows in Corramoan Wood; and Nowlan's little behind him. He was in my own profession in the town of Dundalk, they say, but retired last year, when there wasn't another soul in the three counties

round him he hadn't robbed. That 's the pair of lads that's running for Ballyshanny, and they are scattering their money over the town like seed corn. And the chap would attempt to run against them would need to have a private mint of his own, and it in full blast day and night.

"And that you have not, poor Brian," says I. For when I saw how the land lay, the sorra a bit but I was as doleful as himself.

"Consequently," says Brian, "I have given up all notions of being M.P. for the Borough of Ballyshanny."

"But make slower haste, my friend," says I, "there 's a chance for ye yet."

"I can't see it," says Brian.

"Ye're a blinder man than I take ye for then," says I, "if ye can't."

"Make me sinsible," says Brian.

Says I: "You are a mighty pitiable case, and there 's ten years' pistol practice lost on ye, if ye're not able to go out and clear the field of them two bosthunes." For Brian was one of the best shots in the North-west; and had fought half-a-dozen duels already; and, as was well-known, could wing a man as easy as toss off a drink.

"'Tis no use," says Brian, says he, "no use. I thought of the same dodge myself, and they weren't six hours on the ground till I had challenges sent them; but not one of the pair would satisfy me; for one 's as ill a coward as the other—and a darned sight worse. Of course, such cowardice should have been a nail in their coffins; but, Ned, my boy, this is turn-

ing out a deplorable world entirely ; and there's no shortcomin' in a man's character that money won't cover.

"And they have so demoralised the borough with their money already, that if the priest proved them to be the divil's grand-uncles the morrow, the people would shout : ' Hurrah for the divil ! ' So, Ned Kilgannon," says he, " you see mine is a done case. Stay with me the night, and I'll take a week's holiday the morrow myself, and go shooting with ye on the Leitrim Mountains ; and let Nowlan, and Keaveney, and the borough go to old Nick."

" Brian Mulvenny," say I, " take patience. 'Tis often I heard my mother say that ' God never bolts one door, but He opens another.' If I'm going to remain your friend you must allow me to have a voice in this matter, and while there is still the ghost of a chance I will not consent that your case is hopeless, or go on a wild-goose chase to the Leitrim Mountains to kill crows. Give me," says I, " till breakfast time the morrow mornin', and if I don't discover some means straight or crooked, of making a member of Parliament out of you, in spite of Nowlan and Keaveney, and old Nick, you'll be at liberty to declare, privately and publicly, that it's a feather bolster, and not a head, is stuck atween the two shoulders of Ned Kilgannon."

Brian Mulvenny laughed at me, and says I : " I'm glad, anyhow, to see you gettin' into good humour. Keep so, my boy ; for a low heart and a long face never buttered any man's biscuit yet."

" All right," says Brian, says he, " with a heart and

a half I'll give ye till breakfast-time the morrow mornin'. And I'm expecting by that time you'll consent to come kill crows with me, as ye put it, on the Leitrim Mountains."

But I didn't think with Brian; for, from the days I could first crawl till that day, I was maybe more noted for my tricks and pranks, than for my prayers. Mother she used to say I had more twists and thraws in me than an eel. And it's seldom I yet found myself in the corner I couldn't get out of. "And if I can't help you, my poor Brian," says I, in my own mind, "I'm not worth my salt any longer, and may as well go and drown myself right off the reel, and save the hangman a wasted mornin'!"

And when, next mornin', I come down to breakfast, half-an-hour after the bell had rung, Brian Mulvenny was there, sitting in his slippers, and smiling quizzically at me.

"Well?" says Brian, says he.

And "Well!" I replied.

"Will we go killing crows on the Leitrim Mountains the day?" says he.

"Please Heaven, no," says I, "for we have bigger game, if not better, afore us."

"Ye don't mean to say," says Brian, says he, "that you see any possible means of out-witting Nowlan and Keaveney, and driving them beneath the mud of oblivion again?"

"I don't mean to say anything," says I, "until I try first. But, as the cat can look at the king, so I *can have a try* at making you a member of Parliament."

“ Well, God bless you anyhow,” says Brian, says he, “ and may your hand prosper.”

But he said it more with the air of yielding a generous thing, than with any ring of hope.

Says I: "Have the both of them hired orators?"
"Each of them," says Brian, "has hired one half the



The orators are trampin' after their heels in squads.

borough to orate at the other half. The orators are trampin' after their heels in squads, like *methels* of men going to the bog to cut turf."

"Still I have no doubt," says I, "but one or other of them has room for another man yet."

“ Oh, all is fish that comes to their net,” says Brian,
“ and they ’ll turn no man away with a sore heart

that offers his services—be sure of that. Why do you ask ? ” says he.

“ I ask,” says I, “ because I want to be right-hand man to one of the two candidates ; and it doesn’t matter a brass button to me which of them. That’s all I’ll tell you now,” says I, “ you ’ll know the rest as it comes along.”

There was big excitement in Ballyshanny, sure enough, when I started out that mornin’, and saw the two candidates, both Nowlan and Keaveney ; and I sized the pair of them up for myself ; and I decided that Nowlan was the man for my money. And I very soon made his acquaintance—as it was not hard to do—and in half-an-hour’s time he and I were as pack as pickpockets.

And in less than twenty-four hours’ time I had convinced him and convinced the Borough of Ballyshanny, moreover, that Ned Kilgannon knew how to orate. And Nowlan confessed that I was a godsend to him, and could abuse the other side better than any ten men. And I proved to the satisfaction of everybody, myself included, that Keaveney was a humbug and a hypocrite, a swindler, liar, and imposter, and that he would sell his country for a bad five-pound note, and sell his soul for a pipe of tobacco.

And after that Nowlan made me his right-hand man and grand adviser and confidant in all things. He told me to be in no way sparing of his cash ; his purse was open to me, and I might scatter the contents as best I liked, in what way I thought might best serve him. And, to tell the truth, myself was little

scrupulous about sparing his cash. Seeing he had come to Ballyshanny with lots to lose, I helped him all I could, them days, to lose it.

And, in troth, though I wrought pretty hard, it was not altogether 'All work and no play for Jack,' for an election in Ballyshanny in them days, like that in many another borough, had its little amenities; and there was no day passed that I hadn't the pleasure of taking part in one or more rattling good ructions. And the best of it was, for me, that, while the rest of the lads could only treat themselves to cracking the heads of the opposite side, it gave me equal pleasure to crack the heads of both parties—'Wherever ye see a head, hit it,' was my royal rule in the scrimmages.

For some days I blew up Nowlan with a positive assurance that all Ballyshanny was for him, and that he would be carried into the Membership, as I put it, 'on the top of a grand wave of popularity.'

And then, in accordance with my plans, for the following few days I began to get shaky in my views, and worked Nowlan into a purty nervous state. And the next thing I did was to come out with the intelligence to him, that, applying my experience of elections to the state of things in Ballyshanny, as I now, on further acquaintance found them, my confidence was deserting me entirely, and, if the situation was to be saved, something desperate had got to be done.

This knocked poor Nowlan flat, entirely; for he had come to put so much confidence in me that if I said a black crow was white he would swear it was so, and that his own eyes were deceiving him.

"And ye tell me," says he, when I had announced the black intelligence to him, "that the outlook is as bad as all that?"

"I tell ye," says I, "'tis far worse, only I don't like to frighten ye by telling ye it all."

"Oh! oh! oh! oh!" says he. "And do you know how much money I have thrown away on this already?"

"The divil a bit of me knows how much money you have thrown away," says I. "But this I do know, that there 's no use cryin' over spilt milk; and you have got to brace up and buckle to, and face the worst."

"And, my dear friend, Dr. Kilgannon," says he, "can you offer me any advice, or have ye any workable scheme, cost what it may, that would brighten the outlook for me?"

"Yes," says I. "I have a scheme, and a thorough good one, and the cost will be——"

"How much?" says he. "Don't be afeerd to name it."

"Not a bit afeerd," says I. "It 'll cost something less than a shilling."

"God bless ye!" says he. "What sort of a scheme is that?"

"I'll quickly tell you," says I. "Didn't Keaveney, speaking last evening on a box outside Barney Kenny's public-house, say that you were the manest reprobate ever blotted the face of God's earth?"

"Och," says Nowlan, says he, "but shure he has said that, and the likes of it, when it wasn't worse, as often as there 's fingers and toes on him, every

night for ten nights back. And hasn't he got as good as he give ? ”

“ That 's not the point,” says I. “ You admit he said it ? ”

“ I admit it, of course. I didn't hear him, nor I didn't hear anyone that did hear him, nor I didn't bother axing anyone what he said ; but, if he said anything at all, he said that, if he didn't say more.”

“ Very well and good,” says I. “ That 's so far of the way. Now, Mr. Nowlan,” says I, “ aren't you aware that this Keaveney is the biggest coward ever crawled ? ”

“ I haven't a bit doubt of it,” says he, “ but what are you drivin' at ? ”

“ I'm driving at this,” says I, “ either you want to win this election or you do not. Your chance of winning is, as you know, small this day. And, as I said afore, if you would win, you have got to put on a bould front and make a desperate effort. If you make up your mind to do that, and to be advised by me, I'll stake you my head on it that you'll not only be made M.P. for the Borough of Ballyshanny, but that you'll be actually returned unopposed, and without any more waste of money ; while Keaveney will slink off from here with his tail between his legs, and the very dogs of Ballyshanny barking at his heels.”

Nowlan's eyes lit up, and grew the size of saucers.

“ And tell me,” says he, “ for Heaven's sake, how is this thing to be done ? ”

Says I: "In one way, and only one, and that is to, here and now, sit down and write to Keaveney a challenge to fight ye."

Then Nowlan's jaw dropped.

"In the name of Providence," says he, "sure it isn't wanting to see me shot, and killed dead into a corpse, ye are?"

Says I: "It isn't wanting to see you killed dead, I am—nor killed in any shape, make, or form. But don't you know, and haven't you admitted yourself, that Keaveney is a dirty coward? Don't ye know that he crawled under an egg box, an' lay hiding there when the shindy got up at Maurice Dunyin's the other evening?"

"I believe that," says Nowlan.

"And don't you know, furthermore, that he run into the Widow Flannigan's, and got in under the bed the time of Wednesday night's row?"

"I know that, for certain," says Nowlan, "because I was under the bed myself, when the scoundhril impudently shoved in his cowardly carcase, and near a'most smothered me."

"Very well and very good," says I, "he is a coward proven; and, as we know that, Mr. Nowlan, we are going to take advantage of it. Out in the States of America they play, upon the cards, a game called 'Brag,' and your success in the game depends less upon the value of your hand, than upon the value of your cheek—if I may say so—for the man who can brag best, and offer to back his hand with the biggest figure, will frighten and br'ak down an honest man and make

him forfeit the stakes, although he really has a better hand, but less nerve.

" Well, you're going to come this game of brag over Keaveney. But without any fighting. He hasn't the heart to fight, he daren't fight ; and there 's such bitterness, now, got up between his followers and yours, when it becomes known that he has apologised, or refused to fight, that minute he will have to turn tail and run, if he doesn't want to leave a little bit of himself in the hands of every man who meant to vote for him. Do you see the point ? " says I.

" I—I—I—I—do," says Nowlan. " But are you quite sure," says he, " that he'll not fight ? "

" I only wish," says I, " I was as sure of salvation."

I had the devil's own job in convincing him ; but, after I had argy-bargied, and shown him the pros and cons of the whole thing in my own fashion, and put the pen intil his hand, and nearly held the rascal's hand all the time, I made him write the challenge to Keaveney. But write it he did, and sign it ; and that with such a shaky hand, that if you didn't know already it was his own signature, you would need to be a handwriting expert to know what it was about, at all, at all.

Now, it was after midnight of an evening that this occurred, and I myself was brisk in the mornin' and about early, and was gone off to Keaveney's hotel, carrying the challenge, long before breakfast-time, for fear Nowlan might have repented in the night-time, and tried to trip me afore the message found its man. And when I got to the hotel Keaveney wasn't

out of bed yet ; but I was shown up to his room, where he was half sitting up in bed and rubbing his eyes, and shoving his fingers through his hair and otherwise dressing himself to receive me.

When he showed me a chair, and I sat down on it, it was on the floor I found myself, for it turned out it was only a three-legged one, and it the only one in the room, too. And Keaveney apologised, and said he was sorry, but that it was a rattling good chair when you'd come to know it, and distributed your weight upon it scientifically. He said it used to play the same tricks on him till he got used to it.

Then he asked me would I kindly get up and stand, for I was still sitting on the floor wondering where I was the sorest. When I got up, I said : " Mr. Keaveney, I have come to you on particular business. I have been sent to interview you by Mr. Nowlan, who has got a little complaint against ye, which, I am sure, can be explained and settled as easy as such little differences atween gentlemen usually are."

Says Keaveney, says he : " What's the complaint ? "

Then I reached him Nowlan's note ; and as he read it his face drew out like the bed post. " And did I say this ? " says he.

" You certainly did," says I, " I was listening to ye myself, only what ye said was ten times worse, and was not at all committable to paper."

" And I am sure," says he, " even if I did, Nowlan said far worse of me."

" That's interesting," says I. " Then we're going to have two fights instead of one ? "

" I mean," says Keaveney, says he, " we might very well set the one again' the other and call it square."

" A gentleman," says I, haughty-like—" a gentleman like Mr. Nowlan isn't used to squaring his accounts in that fashion. You have to apologise, or fight. The apology to be given in the same place and manner as the slander, namely, ' from the top of the box outside Barney Kenny's public-house, with all your supporters around ye.' "

" Is it want to have me torn into tatters, by me own voters, ye do ? " says he.

Says I : " I've very little doubt that would be the result of it. But at the same time I don't think that it is etiquette for you to discourse these matters with me. Just give me the name of a friend, and I'll go into the whole business with him."

" A friend," says he, " sure I haven't a friend in the Borough of Ballyshanny that I would depend knots of straws to. Sure there's not a man of them but would be only too happy to see myself and Nowlan kill each other to give them a mornin's fun."

This was the very opportunity I wanted, so I recommended him to send for Attorney Brian Mulvenny, who was accustomed to conduct affairs of this sort, and who would surely bring him out of it with as much glory as was possible under the circumstances. " Moreover," says I, " Brian's a personal friend of my own, and, without committing myself to anything, I may hint to you that I believe Brian can manage to fetch you through with less danger and more honour than you can guess at at the present speakin'. And," says

I, " Brian 'll do nothing that you don't give your whole-hearted consent to." So, after a deal of humming and hawing, he called up a waiter and sent him with a message to Brian Mulvenny, asking him to be so kind as to drop in there to see him after breakfast at about ten o'clock.

In the meantime I dropped round upon Brian and interviewed him myself, and we planned and fixed up the whole matter atween us, according to certain lines I had laid down. And Brian, when he heard my scheme, and seen how the whole thing was to run, was as pleased as a piper ; and he laughed hearty, till the two sides of him nearly cracked. And, in accordance with a portion of our plans, Brian called round upon Keaveney at the time appointed, and found him in a white sweat, intending neither to apologise nor fight, but to show a clane pair of heels and make a run for it out of the country, if there was no other way clear.

But Brian quickly comforted him, and showed him there was another way clear, and a good thumpin' one ; and one by which, without any trouble, mental or otherwise, he could not only save his honour, but gather glory, and make himself the hero of the day, and the most popular man and most belauded duellist of that end of the century, and the way, simply and surely, was, as Brian whispered in his ear, that *there would go nothing but powder in the pistols.*

Keaveney jumped a foot high in his chair with joy at the thing, and crowed, and clapped with delight ; and he shook Brian's hand till poor Brian thought he

would twist it off him. And he told Brian that besides being the aisiest, it was, in his belief, the grandest, and most glorious method ever invented of fighting a duel, seeing that no man would suffer from the fright of an anticipated murder, which, Keaveney explained, kills a man 'quicker than pistols. And he explained, too, that the only fear he had upon him was the fear of bringing the blood of Nowlan upon his head.

Accordingly, he gave commands to Brian that on no account or condition was anything like apology to be given. "Convey to Nowlan," says he, "that a Keaveney never apologises, and never retracts. Let the words he uttered be truth or lies, he is always prepared to prove their truth at the pistol's point, and to shed his blood, or the other man's, in the cause of honour."

Brian came back to me as bright as a lark, and we there and then arranged that the fight was to come off the morrow mornin', at five o'clock, in Terry Connellan's Square Park field, just outside the town. It was to be pistols at ten paces (indeed Keaveney, in his dare-devil bravery, gave orders to Brian that he was only to be put as far from his mortal enemy as that the scoundrel's fire couldn't singe his eyebrows), and the bullets drawn.

Now, when I returned to Nowlan he was running up and down his room, with his heart in his mouth, waiting for me, and he asked me, with a shake in his voice : "What success ?" the minute I showed at the door.

"Good success," says I, "Keaveney consents to fight."

The poor divil, that instant, dropped intil his chair, and he the colour of the bed-sheet in the face, and says he: "Then I'm done for."

"What do ye mane?" says I.

Says he "Didn't you do everything, short of swearing to me your solemn oath, that Keaveney was too big a coward to fight."

"So I did," says I, "and so I believed, and so I do believe still. In this game of 'Brag' I told ye about, the biggest coward brags the most, and blows the biggest, afore he caves in. And that's the schame it is very likely Keaveney is acting on; if he makes you br'ak down, when he's maybe, on the point of br'aking down himself, and chases ye like a singed rat out of the borough, what a fine laugh in his sleeve he'll have at ye."

"And if it should happen," says Nowlan, says he, "that I was lying a corp on the field, with a breakfast of bullets in my stomach that mornin', isn't it meself would then give five thousand pounds in gold, that I could hear him laugh at me—be the same in his sleeve or otherwise?"

"Come, come," says I, "that's balderdash. You must brace yourself like a man, and let us hear no more of that lingo; for, if a whisper of it got out, ye haven't a friend or supporter in the borough that wouldn't sooner help to tie a kettle to your tail and chase you out of the country than sit down to a breakfast of bread and butter with sugar on top of it."

"An' what am I to do at all, at all?" says he.

Says I: "What you are to do is to lay yourself in my hands, and observe my advice, and I'll see you safely through this thing, or know the reason why. What you are to do is to put a boulder face than ever on ye, and brazen it out till the word has come—as it will certainly come—that coward Keaveney has turned tail and run for it."

"That's very good," says Nowlan, "if he does turn tail an' run for it; but if the divil put it in his head to stand his ground and fight, what then?"

"Then, of course," says I, "you must fight too, to save yer honour."

"Oh, honour be blowed!" says he. "What's a man's honour to him when his wife's a widow? I never in all my life yet," says he, "saw where the pleasure comes in, in standing up for another scoundrel to bore holes in ye, with bullets, and 'tis late to begin seein' it now."

"But consider," says I, "that both your reputation and your fortune, and the post ye're looking for are staked upon this, and if you br'ak down there's a clean sweep made of all." This made the rascal think, and, finding I had worked him to that point, I says: "Besides, ye know, as I assured ye before, I assure ye again now, that if you only put a good boul' Billy-be-hanged face on the thing, the other man 'ill br'ak down and run, and you'll be the greatest hero of your day, and the most popular divil that ever was elected for the Borough of Ballyshanny."

Then Nowlan, poor soul, with a trimmle in his voice

that would br'ak cups and saucers, and that nearly touched me own heart with pity for him, consented to put on the bouldest face he could, and push ahead with the game of "Brag."

"But," says he, "if you have deceived me, and that it comes to a fight, and that I have got to stand up in that field till that blackguard Keaveney begins lettin' daylight in and out through me, then my poor innocent blood be on your head, and I'll come back and haunt ye till ye go to yer grave."

"Amen, Amen," says I.

And then I went off and left him. And I got hold of Brian ; and every other man we met on the street we button-holed him, and whispered, each of us, in every ear of him, that Keaveney had mortally insulted Nowlan, and Nowlan, brave fellow, had challenged him, and Keaveney had consented, and they were to fight at five next mornin' in Terry Connellan's Square Park field ; and told him it was a dead secret, and that he was not to breathe it to man or mortal.

We both of us stuck pretty close to our champions, most of that day, to keep their courage up. Nowlan was in small humour for canvassing, ye may be sure ; so not to have to see anyone except myself, he took to his bed, and gave it out that he was laid under with a severe cowl'd. Myself kept on the trot, runnin' in and out to him, carryin' as encouraging reports as I could manufacture, saying that I believed, as far as I could understand, Keaveney was, every minute, on the point of br'aking down, and showing a clean pair of heels out of the borough.

It went to my heart, indeed, to see the narvous state the poor sowl was in, and he tossing and tumbling, like a dog bothered with fleas, in that bed all the day long, and tying the bedclothes in all sorts of knots about him.

For Keaveney's satisfaction, myself and Brian went to his quarters and primed the pistols, with blank charges, right before his eyes. And then we left him in high spirits and hearty good humour.

Myself and Brian brought the pistols with us, and came home. And, as it was then late, and as we would have to be up purty early, we didn't take a tack of clothes off us, but just threw our heads on the bed to get a trifle of winks of sleep, between that time and four. And at four to the minute we were up, and had pulled ourselves together, and given ourselves a lick of a wash—and then I finished the remainder of my scheme.

I took each pistol and put intil it *a charge of red currant jelly!*

Brian, poor fellow, when he saw what I was up to—for I had kept him in the dark till this—threw himself on the bed, and rolled and roared like a bull a-stickin'.

Says I: "Stop your throat, and take charge of the pistols, and get along for your man," while myself went for Nowlan.

Nowlan was sitting on the side of the bed only half dressed, for he hadn't the heart to go any further with it, and I, myself, had to pitchfork the remainder of his articles upon him, and give his face a wipe and his head a rake; and as I did so, I tried to give him all

the wee heart I could. I had to confess to him that Keaveney, accordin' to latest reports, hadn't broken down yet, only I was certain sure he would do so at the last minute. "But all the same," says I, "a careful and cautious man like you should be prepared for possibilities. I hope in my heart," says I, "you have your accounts squared, both with God and man?"

At this he gave a groan, that went cork-screwing down his body from his head to his heels. And says he: "I have done neither, but if this was to be my last word, and my last prayer, I'd lay my hearty curse on the black day and the black hour that I first saw Ballyshanny."

"Tut, tut, man," says I, "don't take it that way. There's often been many's the younger, and stouter, and stronger man than you went out to a duel of a mornin' like this, and forgot ever to come back to his breakfast." And this fetched another groan from him, and says he: "Mr. Kilgannon, 'tis cowl'd comfort for me to know that."

"Think," says I, "if the worst comes to the worst—which Heaven forbid!—think of all the grand pieces that will be written up about ye in the papers, with the whole history of yourself and your pedigree back to the day that Adam closed the garden gate behind him. And a magnificent account of the intrepid courage with which you walked into the field, gripped your pistol, and looked death calmly in the face. And then all the ballads that will be sung about ye, not alone in Ballyshanny, but at every fair and pattrern

in Ireland. My Lord, man," says I, "I envy ye, and ye make my teeth water, and I wish to Providence it was me in your shoes this mornin'."

"And from the bottom of my sowl," says he, "I wish the same to Providence. And 'tis you, bad luck to ye, fetched me into this, and 'tis you, I wish from me heart, was in me shoes this black mornin'."

He was in a purty bad state entirely, and I did my best, as ye see, to cheer the poor fellow every way I could; but I would only allow him one glass of brandy, for fear, I said, his hand should be unsteady—though he wanted to empty a bottle of it into him.

I had a car ready, and I hurried him off to the field; and behold ye, as we went, the people from all arts and parts were dhrovin' and flocking there already; and there was a gatherin' like the fair of Carney in the field afore us when we got there.

"Ye see," says I, to my thrimblin' friend, "although ourselves kept this a dead secret, how it has got out, as meself well knew it would, and if you had been so foolish as to br'ak down and disappoint this crowd, you would be a ruined man, out and out, for ever, and a day afther. "But," says I, "from what I know of you, I know you would sooner br'ak your neck than disappoint the honest people."

"Disappoint them!" says he, "I would give half what I'm worth to see every hanged scoundrel of them swept down the river and washed over the falls of Ballyshanny; coming, as they are," says he, "at five o'clock of a mornin' to amuse themselves keepin' tall

of the bullet-holes, as that scoundrel Keaveney bores them through my carcase."

We got our men on the ground as quickly as we could, and Brian Mulvenny suggested that I should get my



My man was the colour of a lime-wall in the face, and was shaking like a sally-bush in a storm.

back up against my man to prop him, for he was the colour of a lime-wall in the face, and was shaking like a sally-bush in a storm. I didn't know how he would ever hold up his arm to shoot. And Brian said I should build a stone wall under it. And then Brian chatted over with me—within ear's shot of Nowlan all sorts of narvous details, about doctors, and coffins, and burials, which didn't help Nowlan one bit, I assure ye.

Keaveney, he looked as brave as a lion, and stood as stiff and steady as if he was having his picture taken.

Myself got through the arrangements and negotiations quickly, for I was afeer'd my man would drop too soon, and we put the pistols into their hands, at not more than five paces, so as to make a sure thing of it, and they were ordered to fire when I counted

"One, two, three," and dropped a handkerchief. And, when the handkerchief fell, both of them blazed ; and I can't say myself whether it was the lads or the crowd gave the biggest yell the next instant ; but I believe, in my heart, the yells of our two boys topped the noise : and Nowlan dropped on the sod like a wet bag.

"I have murdered the man," says he, "his brain is all over his face. Oh Lord, that ever I should have lived to see this day ! All of yous," says he to the crowd, "take notice, and bear witness, that the real man to blame for the murder is"—but here he had put his hand to his own face, and drew it across it, and at that instant he beheld the thick red stuff he brought away, he roared, "Murdher ! Murdher ! Murdher ! Sure it's a dead corpose meself is !"

A terror-struck crowd closed around him.

And around Keaveney, who was loudly protesting that he was innocent of the murder of that man, another uproarious crowd closed, and showed him what he had not foud, that he, himself, was a murdered man, too.

Keaveney, then, as well as Nowlan, collapsed with a groan that would rend the heart of a whinstone rock.

In a jiffy, half the crowd had both of the murdered men on stretchers, and were gallopin' them of to Ballyshanny at a rate that would jolt the sowl out of a sound man ; Keaveney all the way lamentin' "They promised they'd put no bullets in the pisto Och ! sure they promised they'd put no bullets in t

pistols," while poor Nowlan was so prostrate that he could do no more than groan all the way.

And the other half of the crowd had run off ahead to Ballyshanny and were pullin' all the doctors in the district out of their beds.

To make a long story short, when the people with the doctors' aid found the true state of affairs, there never was such a wild scene in Ballyshanny afore or since. Myself was besieged to know was I the divil planned it. "Whisper," says I, to them as asked me, "the divil that planned it was Brian Mulvenny; but on the peril of your life don't tell a mother's son."

In three wags of a dog's tail, then I saw Brian Mulvenny hoisted on the shoulders of half-a-dozen big men, and myself shouted out: "Brian Mulvenny, for the Borough of Ballyshanny!" And the next minute there was five hundred voices, if there was one, howling the same cry, and he was literally swept into the membership on the heads of the multitude—and Brian so dazed with delight, and with utter surprise, that it took him ten days to come back to his cool senses and thank me.

Keaveney and Nowlan had themselves each safely locked in a room all day, and double-barred and bolted. And they got slinking out of Ballyshanny under cover of the darkness—and I believe were never heard of after, in that quarter of the country.

And that, lads, is how I made a Member of Parliament out of Brian Mulvenny. And, in troth, a brave and a successful member he made, and a credit he was to Ballyshanny, and to all Ireland.

THE DOCTOR'S FIRST AND LAST DUEL

"BUT, Doctor," one of us said at length, "did it never happen to yourself to have to fight a duel in them days?"

Ned Kilgannon was seized with a great fit of laughter that agitated him like a shaking dog.

"Yes, yes," he said, as soon as he regained his self-possession. "Yes, I *did* fight a duel in them days—one."

"Let us hear of it—let us hear of it, by all means, Ned."

"Hear it!" "Hear it!" "Hear it!" was echoed around the room.

"Now, boys, don't gag me, for the Lord's sake! You have heard before this of my first and last duel."

"Not a word!"

"Sorra take the whisper!"

"Devil a breath!"

"That surprises me. Well, lads, charge your glasses, and drink to the grand old times."

When we had done this, the Doctor, unloosing another button in his vest, threw himself back in his chair, the very picture of red-ripe content, and,

little eyes twinkling with a reminiscent light, glanced around the board.

"There 's half of a century gone since that, now," he began, "and it seems like last week to me. I was a stripling, then, of nineteen years—and a rollicking, devilish one, fit for all and any mischief. My head was chock-full of fun and tricks, and very little beside ; for in them days the world, I assure you, boys, gave Ned Kilgannon very little trouble. Which I suppose accounts for me now in my grey hairs being the contented old sinner I am.

"I had gone down to Donegal on the Ordnance Survey—for I hadn't then taken out my degree—and at this particular time we were hanging out in the north of the county at Dunfanaghy. A merry place we found it during our stay. The people couldn't be kinder to us, or gayer than what they were. No end of feasting and drinking, routs and revels. Such a time of spreeing and dissipation we hadn't had for a long time ; and we did enjoy it, I tell you.

"But it was within ten days of our coming that this happened which I tell you the story about. On a Monday night—I remember well it was Monday—we were to have our first Dunfanaghy dance. And it was a great event. Pretty girls in plenty—almost to surfeit—and flirting and courting *go leor*.

"There was a French colonel there—a Colonel Ferry. He had been born and brought up in France ; but his father was a native of Northern Donegal, and had gone to France half-a-century before. Colonel Ferry was a typical specimen, as I conceived it, of the

French military dandy. There's little doubt about it he was a fine figure of a man. His military dress and equipment, too, set him off to perfection; whilst his Frenchy airs and graces likewise helped not a little to impress the impressionable young females of Dunfanaghy. In short, there's no denying that he eclipsed every one of the rest of us most outrageously—yes, outrageously.

"But, fortunately for us, Colonel Ferry confided his attentions in a particular manner to one young lady. She was Miss Una MacSweeny, reputed heiress of a large house and landed property, and I don't know how many thousands of pounds. Independent of the glamour of her dowry, Miss MacSweeny would probably be reckoned fairly pretty, but with her dowry she was, of course, rated as an exquisitely beautiful girl. The Colonel danced constant attendance on Miss MacSweeny, and Miss MacSweeny seemed quite enamoured of the Colonel—as what girl there would not be?

"There were many of the lads present who considered they had a better claim upon Una MacSweeny's gracious smiles than the French Colonel, and who were accordingly stirred with green envy; but none of them cared to cross the Frenchman, for he was a regular fire-eater, and was said to have fought a duel for every moon he saw—and, moreover, always managed to come out of them with both honour and success.

"There was allowed to be no better swordsman in this country, whilst his skill with the pistol was excelled by only few. Little wonder it was, then, that

his courting was comparatively smooth. Within as many weeks after his coming north he had fought half-a-dozen duels with his usual success, and with the result that his path in love, as well as in all other lines, was henceforth smooth beyond the ordinary.

"The first I saw of him was on this night—though it was far from being the first I had heard of him, and not the last either. After that dance there was nothing talked of but Colonel Ferry, Colonel Ferry, Colonel Ferry—and Miss Una MacSweeny. Too much to my mind, was spoken of him, for, so far as I saw, though he was a handsome enough man, and probably a brave enough, he was too pompous and too supercilious by half, and put on far too many airs—seeming to look down on the rest of the lads as so much dirt.

"I had myself made up to Una MacSweeny at the ball, and, after some minutes' conversation, solicited the pleasure of the next dance. Miss MacSweeny—in a very nice and regretful way, indeed—was sorry to have to refuse me as she had promised the next to Colonel Ferry. The Colonel, who was right at my elbow, just then advanced and offered his arm to her, at the same time bestowing upon poor me a look which, he had little doubt, would wither me up into a pitch ball. But I was happy to be able to disappoint him; I had not any intention of being withered by any man's glance, or ill-wish either. I gave the Colonel as good a look as I got—and, indeed, so far as I could judge, with just about the same effect. But the incident gave me a supreme contempt for the Frenchman.

"When next day reminiscences of the ball were rife, and, as usual, the Colonel's name was the beginning, the middle, and the end of the conversation, I told the boys of my *rencontre* with him, and they laughed right heartily, and made out to congratulate me on being alive to tell it. With a great deal of gravity, they advised me to be a deal more circumspect for the time to come, and not again to cross the fiery path of the Colonel, or I'd get badly singed.

"I had been giving the matter some thought myself, for, to tell truth, my little encounter with the Colonel made me more than anxious to circumvent him and to take the triumphant wag out of his tail. Says I to the boys: 'I have little mind to concern myself trying to avoid that gentleman, believe me.'

"'Take our advice, then, and do concern yourself, Ned,' they said, 'in our interests, for we haven't any time to be fooling around funerals just now.'

"'Do you know what it is, boys,' I said—'this country, to the best of my belief, is too small for both the Frenchman and me.'

"The boys laughed again.

"'You'd better pack up, then,' they said.

"'But does it dawn on ye at all, boys, that it's maybe the Colonel who'll need to pack and go?' I said. And this gave the boys regular fits. 'Boys,' I said seriously, 'it's my intention to engage the Colonel in a duel.'

"'You?' they cried, astounded. 'You! To engage Colonel Ferry! And you never fought a duel in your life!'

“ ‘ Yes, me,’ I said— ‘ me to engage Colonel Ferry—even though I never did fight a duel before. It’s not to late too begin, is it ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Well,’ they said, ‘ you’d better get someone to tell you which side of a pistol the shot comes out of before you take the Colonel on your hands.’ ”

“ ‘ As for that,’ says I, ‘ I can give a shrewd guess. I intend knocking some of the proud feathers out of the Colonel’s plumage.’ ”

“ ‘ Are you jokin’ ? ’ says they. ‘ Or are ye only mad ? ’ ”

“ ‘ That’s to be seen,’ says I.

“ ‘ Now, look here, Ned Kilgannon,’ says the boys, ‘ you’re young and only lately from your mother, and we’re not going to stand by and let ye bring your death on yourself.’ ”

“ ‘ Thanky, very much,’ says I.

“ ‘ Colonel Ferry,’ they said, ‘ is the best swordsman and the best shot in Ireland.’ ”

“ ‘ I think I’ve heard that once or twice,’ I said, a wee bit tartly, for everyone had been ding-donging it in my ears from the time I came to those quarters.

“ ‘ Ay, but it’s so,’ they said.

“ ‘ And I didn’t say it wasn’t, nor don’t mean to say it, nor don’t care whether or no.’ ”

“ ‘ He’s pinked fifty men in his time.’ ”

“ ‘ Then he’s pinked plenty, and will pink no more, with God’s help.’ ”

“ ‘ He’s knocked out seven, since he come here, alone,’ they said.

" 'The less reason, then, he'll have to grumble if he's knocked out himself, now——' says I.

" 'Now, Ned Kilgannon,' says they, 'tell us solemnly and seriously, do you mean to throw away your young life?'

" 'Solemnly and seriously,' says I back again, 'I don't mean at all, at all, to throw away my young life. I hope, with God's help, to scratch as grey a poll as any of you; but I do mean what I say—that, before I'm many days older, I'll be on the sod with the Colonel. Moreover,' says I, 'I mean, not only to meet the Colonel, but I mean likewise to chase him—ay, *chase* him, make him run, and, furthermore, to upset his apple-cart with Una MacSweeny, and to spoil, once and for ever, his chances in that quarter.'

" The boys, when they heard that, shook their heads, and left me. And I laughed right hearty to myself when I was alone, for I had a plan in my noddle—I was always fertile of rascally plans and tricks—a plan in my noddle that was going to astonish them all!

" Right enough, the boys, though they pretended to think I was cracked, concluded in their own minds that it was only joking I was. But I didn't say much.

" It was the very next week, and on Monday night likewise, that old Cornelius MacSweeny, Una's pater, gave a dance. Myself and the boys were, of course, all invited—and, it is superfluous to state, all went. The Colonel, as usual, was the central figure of the dance—if we bar Miss Una. I had come with the positive intention of crossing him and coaxing a

challenge out of him, and I was just bursting with mischief. I was not long waiting the opportunity.

"I succeeded in getting one dance—a polka—with Miss MacSweeny, and that just at a moment when I saw the Colonel stood haughtily by, with a scowl on his face. The second or third time that we polked in his direction I, to my great satisfaction, succeeded in dancing on his toe. As soon after the dance as he got the opportunity, the Colonel came up to me.

" 'Sir,' he said, blazing with anger, 'you trod upon my toe.'

"I was mopping my brow with my handkerchief when he came up. I paused respectfully to hear him, and then I went on with the mopping, as I said, 'Oh! no matter, Colonel, no matter. I beg you'll not trouble apologising, for I hardly felt the inconvenience at all.'

"Upon my word, he turned as black as thunder as he wheeled and marched off. I just succeeded in bottling my laughter. But, by and by, I got the boys in a quiet corner and told them the joke. Whether to laugh or cry they hardly knew; but, at length, they laughed, and that merrily. The Colonel didn't enjoy that night any more. What made it worse, one of the boys lost no time in telling Miss MacSweeny the sort of apology I had made to the Colonel; and she nearly broke her sides over the joke, and, hailing the Colonel, told him as best she could for the laughing, what she had heard. This finished him outright, as you may suppose.

"Well and good, I wasn't out of my bed the next

morning when there was a knock at my bedroom door, and Barney, the boy, he come in, telling me that Mr. Latimer, of Ards, was below wanting to see me.

" ' Tell Mr. Latimer, Barney,' says I, ' that I'm not out of my bed yet, but that, if he doesn't mind, he might step up and see me as I am.'

" Mr. Latimer had acted as the Colonel's friend in more than one delicate matter before, and I guessed well what was the bother to him this morning.

" ' Good-morning, Mr. Latimer,' says I. ' How d'ye do? Take a—a '—I was going to say take a chair, but there wasn't such a thing in the room. ' Take a bed, Mr. Latimer,' says I, indicating a spare bed that was in the room.

" Mr. Latimer smiled and seated himself on the side of the bed. ' I'm much obliged,' says he. And says he: ' I suppose, Mr. Kilgannon, you know my business with you this morning? '

" ' Well, hard feedin' to me, if I do, Mr. Latimer,' says I.

" ' Oh! ' says he, ' I'm come from the Colonel. He's naturally upset about that unfortunate mistake of yours last night, and anxious to have it rectified.'

" ' Oh! is that it? ' says I. ' Faith, and to tell you the truth, I'm feelin' upset about it myself. If his toe is anything the worse,' says I, ' tell him I said he can call in the dearest doctor in the countryside, and I'll pay the damage.'

" Latimer, he laughed at this, and went on to say it wasn't so much his toe as his moral feelings that was hurt.

“ ‘Och, is that all?’ says I, giving myself a roll in the bed and gathering in the blankets about me.

“ ‘And, of course,’ says Latimer, ‘he’s wanting satisfaction. That’s my business here this morning, Mr. Kilgannon, and if you will kindly refer me to a friend who will undertake to manage the matter in your behalf, I’ll be obliged.’

“ ‘Phew!’ says I. ‘Is that the way of it, Mr. Latimer? Surely,’ says I, ‘I’ll be more than happy to oblige the Colonel, Mr. Latimer, if you give me the time to get up and shake myself, and look about me for a friend—I’ll get him to call on you as soon after I’ve secured him as possible.’

“ The minute Latimer was gone I was out of bed and had on my clothes, and ordered Barney to send me my breakfast and Tom Murnaghan as fast as the devil would allow him. And in a jiffy I had the breakfast served, and Tom on the heels of it. I managed, between mouthfuls, to convey to Tom how the land lay, and asked him would he be my friend, and Tom swore it would give him a deal of pleasure to stand by me while I’d be shot.

“ ‘But it isn’t going to be pistols, Tom, my son,’ I said.

“ ‘What then? Blunderbusses, ye don’t say?’ says he.

“ ‘Blunderbusses, I don’t say,’ says I, ‘but swords. Tom,’ says I, ‘you must let me have my own way in this matter. It’s going to be a signal and ignominious defeat for the Colonel.’ Tom sneered when he heard *this*. ‘A signal and ignominious defeat, I say, for the

Colonel,' I repeated quite coolly ; ' and I must have the battle royal on an original plan of my own.'

" ' And what plan's that ? ' says Tom, says he.

" ' It's this,' says I. ' Ye must arrange for the duel to be fought with swords, as I said, and on horse-back——'

" ' What ! ' says Tom, says he.

" ' Whist ! ' says I, ' till I'm finished, On horse-back, and that it'll take place in a little inclosure just five minutes' walk out of the town on the west there, that they call Torlogh's Acre. The spectators may spectate from the top of the high clay fence that runs round the field ; but you see yourself the necessity there is not to allow any inside the fences except ourselves and our seconds. And, moreover, the signal for the fight is to be the last chap of the church clock as it chaps out seven o'clock the morrow mornin'. Is that clear for you, Tom Murnaghan ? ' says I, and I took a long swig out of a cup of tea, fixing Tom with the white of my eye at the same time.

" ' About as clear as mud,' says Tom, quite sarcastic. ' In the name of common sense,' says he, ' sure you're not serious about all that blather-skitin' ? '

" ' Amn't I ? ' says I.

" ' You're a fool,' says he.

" ' Thanky,' says I ; ' and I suppose I must be so when you say it, for, if there's one man in the North has a good right to pronounce upon the question of fools, it surely should be you.'

" ' And a blatherskite,' says Tom.

“ ‘ I bow to your superior knowledge there again,’ says I.

“ ‘ Ned Kilgannon,’ says he, leanin’ forward to me, ‘ *do* you mean what you say ? ’

“ ‘ Tom Murnaghan,’ says I, ‘ I *do* mean what I say. *Do* you take me to be as great a fool as yourself ? ’

“ ‘ And them’s the conditions of the duel ? ’

“ ‘ Them’s the conditions—them and no others. If you can’t see your way to arrange things in that way, why, Tom, all I can do is to look out for a second who’ll fall in with my wishes.’

“ Tom, he got up, and, putting his hands in his pockets, begun parading up and down the room without saying a word. And I went on finishing my breakfast.

“ ‘ Ned Kilgannon,’ says Tom, says he, after he’d done five or six turns, ‘ of *course*, I’ll stand to your back no matter how much blamed humbug you introduce into the affair ; only I can’t for the life of me see why you’ll go making both yourself and me ridiculous. Besides,’ says he, ‘ Colonel Ferry is certain to refuse to fight such a duel on such conditions ; while ungenerous people—and there’s plenty in Dunfanaghy, as there is elsewhere—’ll be sure to put their own construction on the matter, and say you only wanted the excuse to shirk the fight.’

“ ‘ Tom,’ says I, ‘ I’d be hanged sorry if the Colonel didn’t fight, for, as I warned you before, I’m going to chase him and disgrace him—chase him from the field and from the North of Ireland—hanged sorry I’d be ; but, take my word for it, I’ve a string to my thumb,

and all I've got to do is pull it, and the Colonel daren't refuse to fight if the conditions were ten times as uncommon.'

" 'What's the string?' says Tom.

" 'Miss Una MacSweeny,' says I, 'with all respect be it said, is the afore-mentioned string. Una will be rejoiced to know that there's going to be a duel about her; she isn't quite up in the niceties of the French duel, and, moreover, even if she was, she wouldn't stand by and see a good thing spoilt. She'll cut the Colonel's acquaintance or insist on his fighting. And, take my word for it, if the conditions were that we'd have to fight standing on the crown of our heads, with parlour tongs for weapons, the Colonel would give in sooner than lose Una's goodwill.'

" 'There's something in that, surely,' says Tom, after a while. 'But, all the same,' says he, after studying it, 'I can't for the life of me see what you're to gain by imposing the conditions you do.'

" 'Tom, my son,' says I, 'I daresay you don't—just yet. But when all's over you'll see what I'll have gained by these conditions; and I venture to prophesy you'll smack me on the back for being a deuced rascally clever fellow.'

" 'I hope so,' says poor Tom, 'I hope so; I'm off then, to see Latimer—and, whist! but it's me'll have to suffer in the cause of friendship. I wish to goodness, Kilgannon, we could only swap places.'

" As Tom Murnaghan had predicted—as I could just as easily have predicted myself—Mr. Latimer, let

alone the Colonel himself, wasn't for hearing of a duel in the way proposed.

" 'It's outrageous, Mr. Murnaghan,' Latimer said — 'outrageous.' "

" And the Colonel he was ready to jump out of his skin when he heard the way the duel was proposed to be. But, as I told Tom, that would soon be rightified ; and I was correct. For no sooner did the business get wind and come to Miss MacSweeny's ears, than she was quite enraptured with it, and insisted on Latimer making the Colonel accept Tom's terms and go ahead with the row by hook or by crook. It wasn't a bit of use for the Colonel to try to make her understand why he shouldn't, and couldn't, and wouldn't fight upon such conditions.

" Miss MacSweeny wouldn't lend herself to reason ; she protested, and insisted that he should, and could, and would fight, and threatened to give the Colonel his dismissal if he refused to do that much for her. So the end of it was that the poor Colonel was bally-ragged and coerced, against both will and conscience, into accepting the terms and agreeing to the fight.

" I was as glad as a goldfinch when I heard it. I took Tom Murnaghan into my plans instanter, and there and then told him in strictest secrecy how I meant to defeat the Colonel——"

" How, Ned ? " we hastily interrupted.

" Said I : ' As I managed to keep my secret then, I guess I'll be able to keep it now. You'll hear it in its proper course.' "

" Well, Tom, he certainly laughed a deal over it

when he heard it. But, when he was tired laughing at it, he hemmed and hawed and shook his head a good deal. 'Now, for the Lord's sake, Tom Murnaghan,' says I, 'will you just do as you're bid, and I'll take the blame—if any blame there is to be.'

" 'In troth, Ned Kilgannon,' says he, 'ye'll only have your share of it. But—in for a penny, in for a pound—as I've been fool enough to be induced by you to put my finger in the pie at all, I'll go through with the business, and take pot-luck for how we'll come out of it.'

" And, to tell the truth, when Tom Murnaghan did commit himself to anything he went through it like a brick. So he now put himself into my hands and did my bidding, and carried out my orders like a black slave; and before he laid down his weary head to sleep that night he had everything in apple-pie order for me, and had me ready to be shoved into the field.

" And we were up with the lark next morning—that is, if we hadn't a step or two the foreway of it—and as brisk as a pair of bees, the both of us. As early as we were up—and we had thought ourselves nearly the first—there was a stream of people moving to the field already, for, to be sure, the day before, the fact that the Colonel had another duel on his hands had run the country like a moor afire, and there wasn't a man or boy, able to creep, crawl, or walk, or drag himself on crutches, but was bent on seeing the fun.

" So, as it drew up to seven o'clock, you may guess

far better than I can tell you the size of the tremendous crowd that lined the ditches round Torlogh's Acre. They were crushing, and crowding, and squabbling, and fighting, too, for seats on the ditch, and room to look on. They were from the furthest ends of the parish, and more than one or one hundred from the next parish to it. Such a crowd, in fact, wasn't seen together in these parts before for a long while.

"Some of them, I was told, had come the night before, with their breakfasts tied up in red handkerchiefs in their hand. They got the choice seats, and in the morning before the play commenced they sat there as content as flowers o' May, munching their meat out of their fists, and waiting with patience and cheerfulness for the fools that provided them with the fun.

"I packed Tom off to the field before me. And he met Latimer there, and talked things over with him and made the final arrangements. At ten minutes to seven, the Colonel, he arrived on a steed every bit as fiery and as haughty as himself—and that's saying a deal. Miss MacSweeny and the flower of the Dunfanaghy young ladies arrived, and were accommodated with good and prominent seats.

"The Colonel, he went prancing round the field looking very high and mighty entirely, and casting an odd, scornful glance at the open-mouthed crowd. Now and again he pranced up to Miss MacSweeney or some other of the young ladies, and passed a witty word or a compliment with them, and then off sidling and prancing again—a mighty sight to see, all gave in.

" There was a deal of pity expressed for me, I was told, everywhere round the field ; it was taken for granted that the Colonel would make mincemeat of me, and that the wind of his sword would be enough for me. And when it crept up and up to seven o'clock, and still no sign of me putting in an appearance, the whisper began to go round that, after all, I had rued and run away ; and some of the boys that had come far and fasting cursed me on the empty stomach (which, they say, is about the most vicious curse that could be given a man) for depriving them of their morning's diversion—it being the general opinion that I should have cheerfully consented to get butchered to make a Dunfanaghy holiday.

" But I did not intend depriving the poor fellows of their little innocent bit of diversion—and I didn't. When the church clock chapped out the first stroke of seven I hadn't put in an appearance, and I believe there was a deal of grumbling begun ; and as the clock went on chapping, and still no sign of me, the grumbling grew louder ; and the Colonel, he shook his head at Miss MacSweeny, and smiled knowingly, as much as to say, ' I'm not one bit surprised.'

" But, lo, and behold you ! the instant the hammer of the clock was coming down on the seventh and last clap, into the field, by way of a narrow, hidden lane, and with a jingle and a jangle, and a clatter and a clang, enough to make the dead shoulder their tombstones and rise up, myself canters, mounted upon Shan the hawker's old mare, ' Jinny,' that was a walking picture of old age and misery, and ' Jinny,'

moreover, all hung and strung round with the most tremendous collection of old tins, tin porringers, and tin cans that was ever yet seen outside a tinker's shop ; and at every step ' Jinny ' gave, ye would take your oath, if ye heard the clang and the clatter, that it was ten tinkers' shops rolling in the Bay of Biscay.

" The field was dazed for one minute, and then the next minute they let such a roar of laughter out of them as might have been heard on Tory Island, ten miles off. I myself looked as grave as a clergyman at the burial service ; and, without losing any time, I clapped the spurs into ' Jinny ' and headed her for where the Colonel was seated on his horse, and both of them looked transfixed.

" And ' Jinny ' had such a peculiar gait of going—first tossing up her head and the front half of her body, and then her tail and the hinder half—that the tins jingled and jangled ten times louder, and the people roared and roared ten times harder than before. And ere I'd got within decent distance of the Colonel his steed began to fidget and shy, and at length took her head with her and turned tail across the field.

" I gave chase after my own fashion, but couldn't catch up, for the Colonel's mare went dancing, and prancing, and bolting like a mad thing all over the field, and would have gone in of a rabbit-hole, if she could only have got one convenient, to escape the tinker's shop that was coming thundering behind her.

" The Colonel was pulling and tugging at his steed for all he was worth, and cursing like a good one—cursing the mare, and cursing me, and cursing the

crowd that yelled with the madness of the laughter. I still kept the countenance of a barrister, and pursued him with all the noise of a foundry from one quarter of the field to another, waving my sword over my head, and yelling on him to stand his ground and fight me like a man.

"The Colonel would have given half of all he was worth to be able to get at me and massacre me there and then; but though he pulled and tugged and walloped his mare to make her answer the rein, and frothed and fumed till he was white and black in the face, the mare would no more face me than a rabbit would face a battery of cannon.

" 'Ho! ho! ho! ye coward, ye!' says I, shaking my sword at him, and pretending to be thirsting for his blood, as I clapped the spur into 'Jinny,' and gave him another chase. 'Ho! ho! ho! ye dirty coward! And this is the sort of courage you show, is it, when ye meet your match? Will ye not stand till I get even one *polthogue* of my sword at ye? I'll carve ye as neatly as that ye'll nearly feel proud of being the corpse that comes under my hand!'

"But the next dash I made at him his mare shook herself free of the last wee bit of control he had over her, and made a clean burst for the gap and the lane I had come in by; and out with her at a bound, and me out after, as close on their heels as ever I could come, clanging and jangling, waving my sword, and roaring to him louder than ever; and the crowd, losing the last control of themselves, too, went into such fits with the pure dint of laughing, that several fainted, and had to be carried off the field.

"The Colonel's mare, getting rid of the field, and having a straight course before her, went off now right across the country like a puff of wind, carrying the poor, heart-broken Colonel without his hat, and his hair streaming behind him, till they soon disappeared from sight altogether.

"That I was what they call 'the hero of the hour,' there's little need to say. 'Jinny' was caught and led in triumph through Dunfanaghy, and I carried on the shoulders of the crowd. The poor Colonel he never pulled rein that morning till he stopped on the Diamond of Derry. And to Dunfanaghy he never came back. He paid his landlady by the mail carrier, and had his traps and fittings sent to him, and he decamped, none in Dunfanaghy knew where, for he did not as much as send a scrap of a letter even to Una MacSweeny—but it's likely he went to France with small delay.

"And, to tell truth, Una did not show any sign of breaking her heart at all after him, barring that it would be with the laughing fits which she took every time she thought of the Colonel and the duel. For myself, I was at once established as a *persona grata* with her; and if I'd only had the sense to mind my p's and q's, and to know what was good for me, I might now be a nice, respectable old retired shop-keeper, telling this story to my little Dunfanaghy grandchildren, instead of the old bachelor fogley I am, telling my tale here for the amusement of the gang of reprobates I see about me——

"Pass that bottle, MacAnulty, confound you!"

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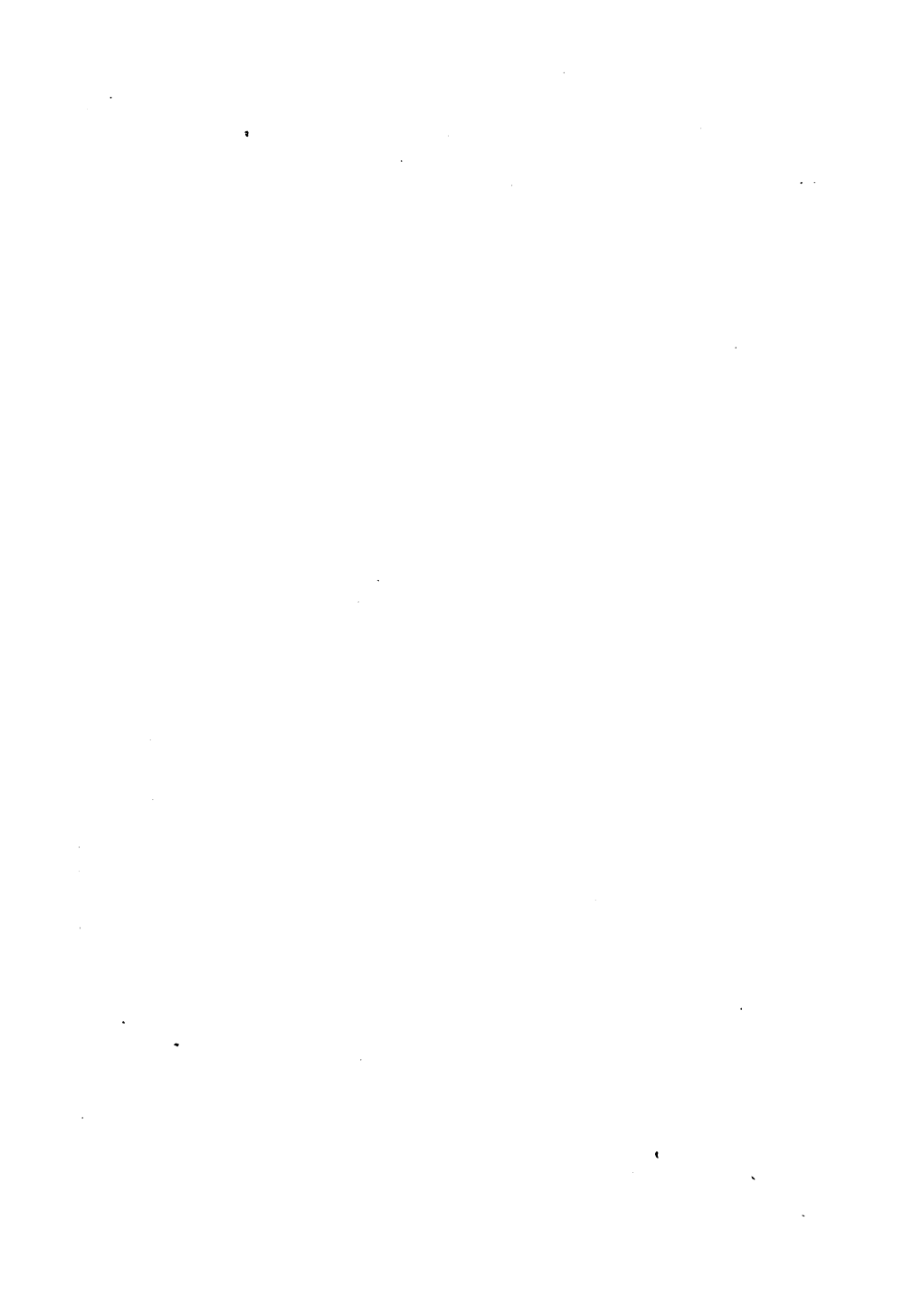
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